



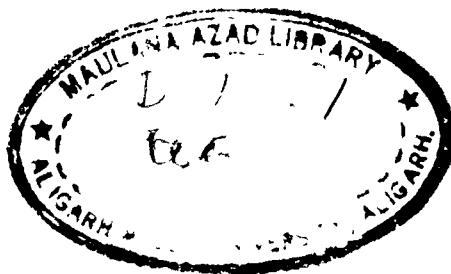
THE MUJTAHIDS AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL MOVEMENT IN IRAN

**Dissertation Submitted for the degree of
Master of Philosophy**

**BY
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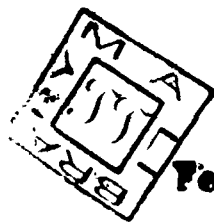
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INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to examine the role played by the mujtahids and liberals during the Constitutional Movement in Iran (1905-1909) in a broader perspective. The study is based on the important writings of the Iranian mujtahids of the period. Efforts have been made to analyse both negative and positive aspects of the role of the mujtahids. A number of books and monographs have been written by Iranians and Western scholars on the clerical attitude towards the Constitutional Movement of Iran, but I have made use of such works which contain the interpretation of the constitution by the leading mujtahids.

The first chapter of this dissertation begins with the origins of Shi'ism and it is necessary in order to understand how Shi'ism came into being. The Shi'ite political thought and institution emerged after the occultation of the twelfth imām. This is followed by the second chapter on Shi'ism under the Safavid Dynasty founded in 1501 AD. It was the result of the charismatic movement which was born in north-western Iran which was

a turning point for Shi'ism. It is important to note that in this period the 'ulamā' tried to work out the theory that the Safavid monarchs descended from the Prophet through the seventh imām Musa-al Kazim. It is with the rise of the mujtahids that the third chapter is concerned. The development of clerical powers and the wide protest led by religious leaders become so strong during the Qajar Dynasty, this was due to the mismanagement and the weakness of the Regime and the foreign dominance of Iranian economy. In order to check the growing influence of foreign powers or the infidels as called by the religious leaders they applied the religious forces. The 'ulamā' gradually devoted themselves to the politics of the country. As a result of the disappearance of the imām, the 'ulamā' wanted to hold the power both in the religious and temporal matters. The motto of the Shi'ite theory of government, taken from the Qur'an ordering the commanding of the good and forbidding the bad, was firmly held by them. The fourth chapter concerns the Revolution of 1906 which witnessed the triumph of religious leaders followed by the last chapter concerning the attitude of 'ulamā' towards constitution. As a matter of fact the clergy did participate in the political affairs of the country during the constitutional period of 1905-09. The question whether they were pro or anti - Shah did not matter. In the initial period of the Constitutional Movement, the 'ulamā' did not understand the requirements of the constitution and its significance neither for themselves nor for their country.

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CHAPTER - I

THE ORIGINS OF SHI'ISM:

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad the immediate question which occupied the minds of the Muslims was the question of the succession of the Prophethood.

The Prophet had no male descendants to succeed him. Only one daughter Fatimah the wife of caliph 'Alī survived. According to the tradition of the Arabs in those days the line of hereditary was not fixed but most of the people preferred the method of election in finding the leader than that of appointment. The question of the succession of the Prophet led to the serious struggle among the Muslim community.

Abū Bakr who succeeded the Prophet was a loyal and strong supporter and friend during the earlier time of the Prophet. He was

¹ Abū Bakr was elected as the successor of the Prophet Muhammad on June 8, 632.

the leader of the prayer during the last sickness of the Prophet. Abū Bakr was a man of the old Arabian style and when he was summoned to the caliphate, he did not change¹ at all.

After the death of the Prophet, Fāṭima was not satisfied with Abū Bakr's decision over the problem of her inheritance from the Prophet. Then she passes away within a period of not more than six months of the death of her father the Prophet. This period though short was important as it showed 'Alī's alienation from Abū Bakr and agreed to be one of his counsellors.²

Most of the members belonging to the class of Banī Hāshim were not happy with the appointment of Abū Bakr as a caliph. A great number of Muhajirun and Anṣār were not willing to accept Abū Bakr because they held that 'Alī should be chosen. 'Alī himself did not owe his allegiance till the time passed for six months, according to some authorities or four days according to other authorities.³

When Abū Bakr was elected to succeed the Prophet, he was sixty-year old and remained in his position for two years. After the death of Abū Bakr,

1 Alfred Von Kremer, The Orient under the Caliphs Eng.Tr. by S. Khuda Bukksh (Philadelphia Pennsylvania, 1974), p.10.

2 Dwight M. Donaldson, The Shi'ite Religion (London, 1932), pp. 16-17.

3 Ibid., p. 13.

'Umar, one of the strong candidates was appointed as a successor to him. He was the first who got the title of commander-in-chief of the Muslim armies (amir al-mu'mineen or commander of the believers).

'Umar, before his death, chose six companions of the Prophet as¹ the elective committee. He rules out that his own son should not be elected as his successor. This elective committee was known as the² Shurā, (The consultative committee). It clearly appeared that the concept of founding a hereditary monarchy did not exist in this period³ as 'Umar himself closed the way for his son to become his successor.

'Uthman the senior was chosen by the Shurā to be the third caliph instead of 'Alī because of his seniority. 'Uthman was the man from Umayyad aristocracy while his two predecessors represented the Emigrants. These⁴ three caliphs did not found any dynasty. Though 'Uthman was pious as the other caliphs were, but he had a weakness of having favourable attitude towards some of his Umayyad relatives.⁵ This attitude created dissatisfaction among other Muslims.

1 Those persons were 'Alī Ibn Abi-Tālib, 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affan, Al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwām, Talḥa Ibn 'Abdallāh, Sa'd Ibn-'Abi Waqqās and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn-'Awf.

2 P.K. Hitti, Op.cit., p.178.

3 Alfred Von Kremer, Op.cit., p.19.

4 P.K. Hitti, Op.cit., p.179

5 Ameer Ali, The Spirit of Islam (Delhi, 1978), p.294.

It is interesting to note that 'Alī was only thirty-three when the Prophet died. For the Arab tribes he was quite too young to hold the responsibility of important administration. Therefore it was quite natural that the celebrated and influential followers of the Prophet, who were older than him, should be chosen. In the election of the first four caliphs, seniority was one of the important factors in choosing the caliph.

'Uthman was one of the son-in-laws of the Prophet and was his faithful companions, but unfortunately there was a growing dissatisfaction¹ against him because of his favouritism. There were many reasons for the agitation against him. One of them was that 'Uthman had given some of the conquered lands to some persons in Iraq. These conquered lands were considered not to be given to any persons who did not participate in their conquest and the rent of those lands should go to the treasury. Another reason was that 'Uthman had chosen the members of his own family for the governorship¹ of some principal provinces. Moreover, it was said that he did not apply the punishments which are mentioned in the Qur'an to some persons and² this showed his partiality.

1 Cf., Ameer Ali, Op.cit., p. 294

2 Montgomery Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought (Edinburg, 1973), p.10.

There were discontentments among the peoples of Egypt, Basra and Kufa and these dissatisfied groups came to Medina to complaint about their plights. They were mostly nomadic tribes. It may be said that the tribal rivalries were involved in deciding which section was anti-'Uthman and which section supported him. Among the Quraishites of Mecca it appeared that the members of the clans which had relation with the clan of 'Uthman (Umayyad) in the former time supported him, while the members of the rival groups, which were attached to the clan of Makhzūm opposed him. The Anṣār were the Muslims who had been living in Medina. Although they were active in supporting the Prophet against the Meccans, still they were not rich. ¹ they did not participate in opposing 'Uthman.

Many respected companions of the Prophet took side with 'Alī because they considered that 'Alī was the rightful heir being related to the family of the Prophet.

About the Shi'ite claim of 'Ali's succession, Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī writes:

"When the ceremonies of the pilgrimage were completed the Prophet, attended by Alī and Musalmans, left Mecca for Medina. On reaching Ghadirkhum he halted. although that place had never been a halting place for Caravans. The

1 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

reason for the halt was that verses of the Koran had come upon him, commanding him to establish Ali in the Caliphate. Before this he had received similar messages, but had not been instructed explicitly as to the time for Ali's appointment, he had delayed because of opposition that might occur. But if the crowd of pilgrims had gone beyond Ghadir-Khum they would have separated and the different tribes would have gone in various directions. This is why Muhammad ordered them to assemble here, for he had things to say to Ali which he wanted all to hear. The message that came from the most High was this: 'O Apostle, declare all that had been sent down to thee from thy Lord. No part of it is to be withheld. God will protect you against men, for he does not guide the unbelievers' (Koran. V. 71). Because of this positive command to appoint Ali as his successor, and perceiving that God would not countenance further delay, he and his company dismounted in this unusual stopping place.

"The day was hot and he told them to stand under the shelter of some thorn trees. He then commanded that they should make a pulpit platform out of the pack-saddles about which the people were assembled. Many had fastened their cloaks about their feet to protect them from heat of the sun. And when the crowd had all gathered, Muhammad walked upon to the platform of saddles and called Ali to stand at his right. After a prayer of thanks he spoke to the people, informing them that he had been forewarned of his death, and saying, 'I have been summoned to the Gate of God, and I shall soon depart to God, to be concealed from you and bidding farewell to this world. I am leaving you the Book of God, and if you follow to this you will not go astray. And I am leaving you also the members of my household, who are not to be separated from the Book of God until they meet me at the drinking fountain of Kawthar'. He then called out, 'Am I not more precious to you than your own lives?' They said, 'Yes', then it was that he took Ali's hands and raised them so high that he showed the whites of his armpits, and said, 'whoever has me as his master has Ali as his master.

Be a friend to his friends. O Lord, and be an enemy to his enemies. Help those who assist him and frustrate those who oppose him'.

"When the Prophet descended from the pulpit it was time for the noon prayers, after which he went to his tent. Near his own tent he had another tent pitched for the Amir u'l-Muminin, the Commander of the Faithful. When Ali was seated in this tent, Muhammad ordered the Musalmans group by group, to go and congratulate him on his succession to the Imamate and to salute him as Amiru'l Mu'minin. Both men and women did this and Umar as much pleased as any body."¹

Malik Ibn Harith al-Nakha'i moved from Kufa in the year 2 A.H. alongwith two hundred men, while Hakim Ibn Jabala al-'Abdi alongwith one hundred men moved from Basra. Besides, these six hundred Egyptian troops came under the leading of Abdu'l Rahman Ibn Udaish al-Balawi. According to Al-Wakidi, Abdu'l Rahman was one of those who participated in the election under the tree. The son of Abu Bakr Mohammad was also included in this group. he urged them to revolt against 'Uthman. Although the reason of the revolt was lengthy but the main cause was the issue of ² Marwan Ibn al-Hakam.

It is relevant to state here the political attitudes of those who were in the time of the Umayyad :

¹ Majlisi, Harat al-Qulub, vol III, p. 322., cited by Dwight M. Donaldson, Ibid., pp. 1-6.

² Ibid., p. 23.

1. A group of people believe that 'Uthman was the true caliph and deserved caliphate and they went to the extent of opposing 'Alī and blaming him as responsible for not punishing the murderers of 'Uthman and their associates.

2. While others may be called as mild supporters of the Umayyads. According to them Umayyads were true caliphs and believed that it was duty of all the Muslims to accept their rules. Many of them tried for the unity of the Islamic Community. They are often described as the Murji'ites. They believed that both 'Uthman and 'Alī were truly caliphs and left the decision to God to punish the sinner.

3. There were some critics of the regime on Ibrāhīm an-Nakha'i. Those who called him Saba'ite or Murji'ite might point out that Ibrāhīm did not consider 'Alī as the messiah but that he was superior to 'Uthman. It means that he accepted the ruling of the Umayyads and at the same time thought that there could be some other rulers who were better than the Umayyads.

4. The Umayyads have been criticised vociferously by a group of people known under the general title of the Kaysaniyya. When Muḥammad

Ibn Hanafīyya expired in 700 A.D. they believed that he was still alive and would come back as Mahdī to set things aright. We get an elaboration of this doctrine which implied that 'Alī the son-in-law of the Prophet was the first inheritor of the position of caliphate vacated by the Prophet. He was believed to be the rightful imām and the best Muslim so he had chosen Muhammad Ibn al-Hanafīyya as his successor

About the assailants, Donaldson writes. "were some of the Beni Zuhrah who had come to avenge Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, who was one of their confederates. There were others also of the Hudhail, who were of the tribe of Mas'ud, and there were a number of the Beni Makhzūm with their clients, who had come on behalf of 'Ammār, and there were some of Beni Ghifar and their associates of the party of Abu Dharr. And finally there was Taim Ibn Morrah and Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr."

It has rightly been pointed out that "On there side, the Umayyads were not content with imposing the notion of unconditional obedience to the caliphs: they established at the same time, in effect the dynastic caliphate. With abandoning principle of election followed by oath of

1 Dwight M. Donaldson, Op. cit. p.24

fealty (bay'a), Mu'awiyah accomplished his object by means of an election guaranteeing in advance that his son Yazid would be recognized as his successor.¹"

During the reign of 'Uthman, the power of Mu'āwiyah spread rapidly. Besides Syria, Iraq on the northern part also was under the control of Mu'āwiyah. He aroused the feelings of the people in the city of Damascus about the murder of his kinsman 'Uthman. He asked 'Alī, who became the caliph in the month of Dhu'l-Hijja (AH 37), to find the person who killed 'Uthman. In case 'Alī could not do this he should retire from the post. 'Alī had many supporters. They were mainly Persians or non-Arabs who stayed in Mesopotamia and did not feel satisfied with the arrogance of the Arabs.² Also the Qurra³ were opposing 'Uthman's policy and attached themselves with 'Alī.

After becoming the caliph, the first work of 'Alī was to dispose of the powers of Mu'āwiyah, the governor of Syria inspite of the fact that his friends had warned him not to do because Mu'āwiyah had been a

1 The Encyclopaedia of Islam, art. "Khalifa".

2 "The readers of al-Quran."

3 Dwight M. Donaldson. Op.cit. p.37.

powerful man since the time of 'Uthman. It may be that if 'Alī did not dispose Mu'āwiyā, the people will not condemn him. 'Alī's action made Mu'āwiyā so angry that he decided that he must fight with 'Alī.

However, 'Alī's caliphate was not recognized by all. 'Abdallah Ibn 'Umar and those who shared the same idea refused to accept 'Alī and left Madina. 'Uthman's Kinsman Mu'āwiyā, who controlled Syria, also opposed 'Alī when he realized that 'Alī could not avenge the murder of Uthman. Thus Mu'awiyā became the rival of 'Alī.

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At Siffin, south of Al-Raqqah, both groups confronted each other. 'Alī had an army of 50,000 soldiers from Iraq and Mu'āwiyā got his army from Syria. The battle came to an end on July 28, 657 in which 'Alī nearly got victory.² Soon after the truce of Siffin in Harura (a village two miles from Kufa), some of the Khawarij followed 'Alī to Kufa. Thinking that 'Alī had reaffirmed his trust in the arbitration so they left him to join their brethren in Harura. 'Alī realized the valor of the warriors and requested them to return. The militant Khawarij terrorized all Muslims who did not follow their beliefs. 'Alī with his troops of 6000 fought with

1 situated on the west bank of Euphrates.

2 But Amr al-As one of the leaders of Mu'āwiyā party used a shrewd method when he fastened the copies of the Qur'an to the end of a lance and threw it in the air. It meant that the warfare should be decided by Qur'an. 'Alī agreed to give up the war in order to avoid the bloodsheds of the Muslims.

them at Nahrawan and the Khawarij who numbered about 60,000 were seiged. 'Alī triumphed in the battle but it created the feeling of revenge among the Khawarij. This battle proved that the Khawarij were men of discipline they were ready even to sacrifice their lives for their beliefs. The intention of the Khawarij to take revenge on 'Alī led to 'Alī's death since he was killed by a Khawarijite on January 24, 661.

After the death of 'Alī, Hasan his son became the caliph. When Mu'awiyah's armies swept Iraq and Hasan submitted to Mu'awiyah. When Mu'awiyah grew old, he appointed his son, Yazīd, as his successor. Many people refused to take the oath of allegiance to Yazīd. Husayn who decided himself the legitimate caliph after his brother, refused to accept Yazīd.

1 Elie Adib Salem, Political Theory and Institution of the Khawarij (Baltimore 1956), pp. 17-18.

2 P.K. Hitti, Op.cit., p. 182.

3 It appears from Percy Sykes, History of Persia, vol. I (London, 1951, p. 539) that 'On his death bed Mu'awiyah sent a message to Yazid, his son and destined successor, warning him of the troubles which lay before him. The message ran, "As for Husayn, the restless men of Iraq will give him no peace till he attempt the empire; when thou hast gotten the victory, deal gently with him, for truly the blood of the Prophet runneth in his veins. It is Abdullah son of Zuhayr that I fear the most of thee. Fleece as the lion, crafty as the fox, destroy him root and branch." Had the dying Caliph's advice been followed, the course of history would have been affected.'

Mu'āwīya died when he was seventy-five years old after ruling for more than nineteen years. The death of Mu'āwīya gave a new hope for the people who favoured 'Alī and his descendants. In Iraq, especially in the city of Kufa, many people declared themselves supporters of 'Alī's descendants. They made a secret meeting and agreed to invite Husayn to Kufa and worked out a plan against Yazīd.

Ultimately Husayn was killed at Karbala on October 10, 680. As Hitti pointed out, "The blood of al-Husayn, even more than that of his father, proved to be the seed of the Shi'ite. "Church". Shi'ism was born on the tenth of Muharram. From now on the imāship of 'Alī's progeny became as much of a dogma in the Shi'ite creed as that of the prophethood of Muḥammad in Islam."¹ From this date the Shi'ites were more active than ever before. They did not agree with the tyrannical Umayyads. As they were the people who were the descendants of the Prophet, it led to popular sympathy. The people of Iraq almost became the Shi'ites and opposed Syrian rule. Even in the Sunnite ranks themselves pietists² charged the caliphs with worldliness and neglect of Quranic and traditional law and were every where ready to give religious sanction to any opposition that might be raised."

1 Ibid., p. 191.

2 Ibid., p. 282.

During the Umayyad rule the Shi'ites spread widely. The basis of Shi'ism was the claim to regard 'Alī and his son as the true imāms. Iraq was considered an important land in which Shi'ism was born. Among the Shi'ites themselves many small sects sprang up such as the Isma'ilites, the Qarmatians, the Druze and the Nusayris.etc.

There were other matters which reduced the power of the Umayyad dynasty. The progeny of Abbās b. Abd-al-Muṭṭalib b. Hashim the uncle of the Prophet had started their claim to the caliphate. They claimed their relationship with 'Alī saying that 'Alī belonged to the Hashimite clan which was the branch of the Quraysh.

The non-Arab Muslims, especially the Iranians Muslims were not satisfied with the Umayyad rulers. In the words of P.K. Hitti:

"Far from being granted the expected economic and social equality with Arabian Muslims, they were instead generally reduced to the position of clients and were not always exempted from the capitulation tax paid by non-Muslims. What made them more discontented was the consciousness that they represented a higher and more ancient culture, a fact acknowledged even by the Arabians themselves. It was among such discontented neophytes that the Shi'ite Abbāsid seed found fertile soil. From al-'Irāq, always loyal to the Alid cause, the Shi'ah doctrine spread into Persia and struck root especially in the north-eastern province, Khurāsān, which was then much larger than now. In Persia the way had been somewhat prepared by the Azd-Mudar feud perpetuated by the Arabs. But deeper forces were at work. Under the guise of Shi'ah Islam, Iranianism was revivifying itself.

The zero hour in the life of the Umayyad dynasty approached when a coalition was effected between the Shī'ite, Khurāsānian and 'Abbāsīd forces which was utilized by the last for their own advantage. This coalition was headed by abu-al-'Abbās a great-great-grandson of al-'Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet. Under his leadership revolutionary Islam opposed the existing order with a feigned ideal of theocracy and a promise of return to orthodoxy."¹

The Abbāsids put to an end the Umayyad rule in A.D. 747. Later on they changed their attitude by opposing the Shi'ites. As a result of their failures, there emerged messianic ideas among the Shi'ites after the mysterious disappearance of the twelfth Imām.

THE FORMATIVE STAGE OF SHI'ISM:

The emergence of the Shiite movement was preceded by some phenomena which took place under the Umayyads. As Lamton writes:

"The succession of the Shia from the main body of Muslims, the Sunnis, was occasioned by the political events arising from the hostility between Ali and the Umayyads. In the beginning the Shia was simply political legitimist movement, which held that the leadership of the community belonged to Ali and his descendants. Later it became a religious movement, and because of the connection between unorthodoxy and political opposition, it also became a kind of general umbrella for various movements of social and economic discontent. Of the numerous Shi'i sects only three are important from the point of view of political theory. They are Zaydiyya, who represent

¹ Ibid., p. 283.

what may be called 'political Shi'ism, the Isma'iliyya, who represent "social Shi'ism and the main body of Shi'a which lies between these two extremes. the Imamivva."¹

Shi'ism appeared at the end of the ninth century. It was usually believed that Shi'ism was an Iranian phenomenon, but the fact is that many of the phenomena of proto-Shi'ism are first among the Arabs. In the words of Montgomery Watt:

"In particular most leaders of revolts (other than Kharijite) during the Umayyad period made vengeance for 'the family' one point in their programme for action; and this is typically Arab idea. With this was usually linked the further idea that 'the family' possessed special qualities - an idea in accordance with the common Arab belief that good and bad qualities like nobility and meanness were transmitted genetically through the family stock; from the exceptional gifts seen in Muhammad. it might be inferred that there was something exceptional about the clan of Hashim.

The idea most characteristic of later Shi'ism, however, was that of the imam or charismatic leader: and this implies that a series of men, each usually designated by his predecessor, had a special charisma over and above the general charisma of the clan of Hashim, though doubtless connected with it. The first expression of this idea (if a historian's report may be accepted) occurred in 658 when some of Ali's followers went to him and said that they would be 'friends of those whom he befriended and enemies of those to whom he was an enemy'. This records a willingness to accept Ali's judgement in these matters and presumably also in others.

¹ Ann K.S. Lambton, State and Government in Medieval Islam (Oxford, 1981), p. 219.

and so implies, at least to a slight degree, the belief that 'Alī was a charismatic leader. Such a belief can not always be clearly distinguished from the belief that in a time of crisis a member of 'the family' is the wisest guide. As the phenomena of the Umayyad period are examined however, it will be found that the idea of the charismatic leader becomes more prominent until it dominates the thinking of the supporters of 'the family'.

When 'Alī was killed in January 661 by a Kharijite in revenge for his comrades slaughtered at an-Naharwan, his son al-Hasan with Hāshimite support from Kufa made a half hearted attempt to claim the caliphate. He was defeated by Mu'āwiyā, but allowed to retire to a life of luxury in Medina. Ten years later in 671 there was an abortive revolt in Kufa led by Hujr ibn-Adi-alkinidi. Next, after the death of Mu'āwiyā and accession of Yazīd in 680, came the bid for the caliphate by al-Husayn the full brother of al-Hasan. Though he received only a fraction of the support he expected, he refused to give up, and his small band of about a hundred, mostly members of 'the family', was massacred at Kerbala halfway between Kufa and the site of the later Baghdad. This martyrdom of 'the family' has dominated the imagination of Shi'ites in later times. During the four troubled years that followed Kerbala nothing is heard of the Hāshimites in Iraq, perhaps because anti-Umayyad feelings had found a focus in Ibn-az-Zubayr at Mecca who was claiming the caliphate."

It is no doubt that imamate is the main theme of the Shi'ite Islam. The idea of imamate does not concern only to the qualities and number of imāms but also concerns the extent of the guidance they give to the society. ²

1 Montgomery Watt, Op. cit., p. 40-41

2 Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1735-1906
The role of Ulama in the Qajar period (California, 1969), p.2.

To quote Montgomery Watt again:

"From this minimal belief there is to be distinguished any form of belief in which charismatic qualities are held to be present in the clan of Hāshim or in some member of it. These charismatic qualities might be conceived in different ways, varying from a supremely high degree of human excellence, including gifts of leadership, to a super natural or divinely given endowment. Belief in an inheriting of special human excellence through the clan stock would be in accordance with the ideas of the pre-Islamic Arabs, whereas the ideas of the manifestation in men of super human qualities may rather have come from Aramaean and Persian elements among the Muslims. In some form or other, however, the charismatic leader of the house of Hāshim had an appeal for masses of Muslims during the period from 700 to 850 and later. It was only gradually the belief in charismata restricted to the descendants of al-Husayn became pre-dominant. For several decades Muhammad Ibn-al-Hanafīyya and his son Abū Hāshim attracted more attention."¹

It is generally known that in the beginning the Shi'ite movement was entirely confined to the Arabs but the non-Arabs began to join it after the revolt of Al-Mukhtār b. Abi 'Ubayd al-Thaqafi who based his policy on the book of God, the Sunna of the Prophet, vengeance for 'the family', defence of the weak, and the Jihad against the evil doers. Al-Mukhtār refused to acknowledge the Caliphate of Ibn al-Zubayr in Iraq, and he was eventually killed.

¹ Montgomery Watt. Op.cit., pp. 54-55.

After the death of Al-Mukhtār, an important proto-Shi'ite phenomena appeared in the middle of the eighth century. The idea was propagated that Muḥammad b. al-Hanafiyya had not died, but that he hid himself in the mount Raḍwā and would return at the suitable time bringing justice to the world. This was the first time that such an idea appeared among Muslims, and it was the starting point of the idea of the immortal imām or messianic belief began to spread in A.D. 700 after his death. During the Umayyad period, the messianic idea was mixed with political quietism. This idea became the main consideration of the Shi'ite sects in several forms.

As H.A.R. Gibb writes "It is not yet clear by what stages these two original forms of Shi'ism were welded together, the Arab legitimist Shī'a and the esoteric Shi'ism. But in the third and fourth centuries of the Muslim era the process was already far advanced. The qualities of the gnostic Imāms were transferred to the descendants of the Prophet through Ali and the Prophet's daughter Fātima, and the gnostic doctrines were adopted as the religious constitution of the Shi'a sect. The majority of the minor sects disappeared, leaving the field to three principle groups of Shi'ites".¹

According to the Shi'ite belief the imām who was the charismatic leader was in the state of concealment (ghayba). It was also believed in his return (raj'a) who will then fill the earth with justice.

1 H.A.R. Gibb Op.cit., p.124.

THE DIVISION OF SHI'ISM :

The division in Shi'ism took place after the martyrdom of Husayn.

To quote Tabātabā'ī:

"Shi'ism did not undergo any divisions during the imamate of the first three Imams : Ali, Hasan and Husayn. But after the martyrdom of Husayn, the majority of the Shi'ites accepted the imamate of Ali Ibn Husayn al-Sajjād, while a minority known as the Kisāniyah believed that the third son of Ali, Muhammad Ibn Hanafiyah, was the fourth Imam as well as the promised Mahdi, and that he had gone into occultation in the Radwā mountains and one day would reappear. After the death of Imam al-Sajjād the majority of the Shi'ites accepted as Imam his son, Muhammad al-Bāqir, while minority followed Zayd al-Shahīd, another son of Imam al-Sajjād, and became known as Zaydis. Following Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir, the Shi'ites accepted his son Ja'far al-Sadiq as Imam and after the death of Imam Ja'far the majority followed his son Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm as the seventh Imam. However, one group followed the older son of the sixth Imam, Ismā'il, who had died while his father was still alive, and when this latter group separated from the majority of Shi'ites it became known as Isma'ilis. Others accepted as Imam either 'Abdallāh Al-Aftah or Muhammad, both sons of the sixth Imam. Finally, another party stopped with the sixth Imam himself and considered him as the last Imam. In the same way, after the martyrdom of Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm the majority followed his son, Ali al-Ridā, as the eighth Imam. However, some stopped with the Imam and became known as Wāqifiyah.

From the eighth Imam to the twelfth, whom the majority of the Shi'ites believe to be the promised Mahdi, no division of any importance took place within Shi'ism. Even if certain events occurred in the form of division, they lasted but a few days and dissolved by themselves. For example, Ja'far, the son of the tenth Imam, claimed to be Imam after the death of his brother, the eleventh Imam. A group of people followed him but scattered in a few days and Ja'far for himself did

not follow his claim any further. Further more, there are differences between Shi'ites in theological and juridical matters which must not be considered as divisions in religious schools. Also the Babi and Baha'i, sect, which like the Batinis (the Qarāmitah) differ in both the principle (usūl) and branches (furū) of Islam from the Muslims, should not in any sense be considered as branched of Shi'ism.

The sects which separated from the majority of Shi'ites all dissolved within a short period, except two: the Zaydi and the Isma'ili which continue to exist until now. To this day communities of these branches are active in various parts of the world such as the Yemen, India, and Syria."¹

²
ZAYDISM:

The followers of Zayd al-Shahīd, the son of imām al-Sajjād, were called Zaydis.³ Zayd al-Shahīd was killed in the rebellion against the Umayyad dynasty in the years 737.

The followers of Zayd regarded him as the fifth imām of the Household of the Prophet. After him his son, Yahyā b. Zayd who rebelled against the caliph Walīd b. Yazīd took his place and latter he was also

¹ Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabāṭabā'ī, Shi'a, Eng. Tr. Sayyid Husayn Nasr (Qum, 1981), pp. 75-76.

² According to Abu-Mansūr 'Abd-al-Qahir Ibn-Tahir Zaydiyyah was divided into three sects, and the Imamiyah into fifteen.

³ The Zaydis are dominant in Yemen.

killed. After Yahyā, Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh and Ibrāhīm b. Abdullāh who revolted against the Abbāsīd caliph al-Mansūr al-Dawānīqī were chosen as imāms and they were also killed.

In the first stage, the Zaydis accepted the first two caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar, as their imāms. But after that some of them rejected the first two caliphs and considered 'Ali as the first imām. Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, writes that in the matters of principles of Islam (uṣūl), the Zaydis followed a path close to that of the Mu'tazilites, while in the field of the law (furū) they applied the jurisprudence of Abū Ḥanīfah, the founder of one of the four Sunni schools of law. They also differed among themselves concerning some other problem.¹

As H.A.R. Gibb writes that the Zaidis, are closest to the old legitimist Shi'ism and to the orthodox Sunni Islam. They recognize continuing series of imāms, to whom no supernatural qualities are ascribed.²

1 Ibid., p.77.

2 H.A.R. Gibb., Op.cit., p. 124.

In the word of Montgomery Watt:

"It was asserted that a form of Zaydism or some thing very like it was the doctrine followed by al-Ma'mamūn and some of his chief officials. Perhaps it was to this period that Ibn-Qūtayba's statement applied that al-Jāḥiẓ sometimes defended the Zaydiyya against the 'Uthmāniyya and the Aḥlas-Sunna. After the time of al Jāḥiẓ little is heard in Iraq about the Zaydites and the centre of interest in Zaydism shifts to two points on the periphery of the caliphate, to the region south of the Caspian sea to the Yemen, where small Zaydite state were created. The chief intellectual leader of the northern state was al-Uṭrūsh (d.917). Because of certain peculiarities in doctrine and practice the northern Zaydites were reckoned to belong to the sect of the Nāsiriyya, from a name of honour given to al-Uṭrūsh an—Nasir li-l-Ḥaqq.¹

The Zaydites thought that there doctrines contained the truth for all Muslims so they did not adopt missionary tactics as the Fatimids did. When they established the small state of their own they remained away from the rest of the Muslim Communities. Even though they had high standard of Yemeni Zaydism, the Zaydites did not have much contribution to the Islamic thought because they were away from the rest of Muslim world.

¹ Montgomery Watt., Op.cit., pp. 272-273.

Of all the Shi'ite sects the Zaidis were the nearest akin to the Sunnites. It was the most tolerant sect. They did not believe in any hidden imām, but they were hostile to Sufism like other sects of Shi'ism.

THE ISMĀ'ILIS :

The Ismailis sometimes called the Sab'iyya or Seveners. They consider that the imām after Ja'far al Ṣadiq was his son Ismā'īl and not Mūsā al-Kāzim, as the imamites believe. It was an underground movement from about 765 until the end of the ninth century. As a underground movement Ismā'īlism prospered because it developed hierarchic organization. The imām, who remained hidden while the movement was underground, there was a body of agents, each with the title da'ī or 'Missioners', 'summoner', and under the supervision of a chief da'ī the agents, though often acting secretly, had certain contacts with persons outside the movement. The movement achieved its first success at about 894 A.D. was when Abū Sa'īd al Hasan al-Janābī, the da'ī of the branch or sect known as the Qaramita established a kind of republic in eastern Arabia and made Bahrain its centre. It was from Bahrain that the missionaries carried to Ismā'īlite propaganda to various parts of the 'Abbāsid caliphate. At the beginning of the tenth century the Qaramita revolted in the Syrian desert, which was suppressed with great difficulty. In eastern Arabia the

Caramathian state continued to flourish till the end of the eleventh¹ century.

Ubayd-Allah, who was considered a Mahdī, founded his own state in 909 by overthrowing the Aghlabid reign in Tunisia and the Rustamid dynasty in western Algeria, and conquered Sicily. After that, in 969, he conquered Egypt and shifted the capital to Cairo.

The early history of the Ismā'īl movement remains obscure. It was not until the 3rd/9th century had passed. When it appeared in the form of a secret revolutionary organisation carrying on its missionary² activities in many muslim countries of the world and would reappear as the Missiyah or Mahdī. Another group of people believed that the story of Ismā'īl's death was created to hide the truth in fear of the Abbāsid caliph al-Mansūr. However, the group of people considered that Ismā'īl was the true imām, so when he died, the imamate should be transferred to his son Muhammad b. Ismā'īl, the ideas of the first two groups disappeared, but that of the third one contains upto the present time. The main doctrines of the Ismā'īlis have been ably summarised by W. Madelung in the

1 Montgomery Watt, Op.cit., pp. 271-272.

2 Encyclopaedia of Islam, art. "Isma'iliyya".

following words which deserve to be quoted in full :-

The doctrine propagated by the Pre-Fātimid Ismā'īlī revolutionary movement of the second half of the 3rd/9th century can be derived in its outlines from later Ismā'īlī works and report of anti Ismā'īlī authors. It embodied already the basic framework of the later Ismā'īlī religious system, though it was consequently modified in some important respects. Fundamental was the distinction between the Zāhir exterior or exoteric, and the Bātin inward or esoteric, aspects of religion the Zāhir consists in the apparent, generally accepted meaning of the revealed scriptures and in the religious law laid down in them. It changes with each Prophet. The batin consists in the truths (ḥakā'ik) concealed in the scriptures and laws which are unchangeable and are made apparent from them by the ta'will interpretation which is often of a cabalistic nature relying on the mystical significance of letters and numbers. These truths form a gnostic system comprising a cosmology and a cyclical hierohistory. At the basis of the pre-Fātimid cosmology was a myth, only imperfectly reflected in the later sources, according to which the divine imperative kun, consisting of the letter Kāf and nūn, through duplication formed the two original principles Kūnī kadar. Kūnī was the female and Kadar the male principle. The seven letters of kūnī kadar were known as the seven higher letters (al-hurūf al 'ulwiyya), which are the archetypes of the seven messenger Prophets and their revealed messages. From the two first principles proceeded three spiritual powers, djadd, fath, and khavāl, identified with the three archangels Djibra'il, Mikā'il and Isrāfil, which mediate between the spiritual world and man in the physical world. The cyclical history progresses through seven eras, each inaugurated by an enunciator (nātik) Prophet bringing a revealed message. Each of the first six nātiks, Ādam, Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, 'Isā and Muḥammad, was followed by a fundamental (asās) or silent one (ṣamit) who revealed the bātin of the message, and by seven imams, the seventh imam in each era rises in rank and becomes the nātik of the following era, abrogating the law of the previous nātik and bringing a new one. In the era of Muhammad, 'Alī was the asās and

Muhammad b. Ismā'il the seventh imām. Muhammad b. Ismā'il on his reappearance in the near future will become the seventh nāṭik, the Ka'im or Mahdī, and will abrogate the law of Islam. His message will, however, consist in the full revelation of the bāṭin truths without any zāhir law. He will rule the world and then the physical world, sitting in judgement over humanity. During his absence he is represented by twelve hujjaj residing in the twelve regions (djazā'ir) of the earth. The cyclical history was sometimes coupled with astrological speculations, and astrological predictions were made specifically concerning the date of the coming of the Ka'im.¹

BRANCHES OF THE ISMA'ILIS:

The Isma'ilis are divided into a number of sub-branches, namely:

The Batinis:

Before the appearance of 'Ubaydallāh al-Mahdī in North Africa, in the year 891, there appeared an unknown person in Kufa from Khuzistan who never disclosed his real name. He fasted during the day time and prayed at night. He invited the people to join the Isma'ili sect. He went to Damascus and no one ever heard of him again.

¹ Encyclopaedia of Islam, art "Isma'iliyya."

He was replaced by one Ahmad, who was known as the Qaramitian, he started preaching Batini doctrines in Iraq. The Batini school "interpret the external aspects of Islam in an esoteric manner and considers the externals of the Shari'ah to be only for simple minded people of little intelligence who are deprived of spiritual perfection."¹

The whole philosophical system of the Batinis are based on the following principle: (a) bātin (b) ta'wīl (c) khāss wa 'āmm, and (d) taḳīya.

The Batinis believed that every text had its hidden or inner meaning (bātin), as compared to the literal meaning (zāhir). Not only the texts which are in any case metaphorical, but also in historical passages, moral exhortations, legal and ritual prescriptions. Each and every thing - person, act, or object was to be understood symbolically. Sometimes the whole anecdotes were read as 'extended allegories'. The use of numbers and letter as symbolism was a common practice. They applied the same procedure to the sacred books of the non-Muslims. In fact this attitude was adopted towards the whole of nature for the bātin represented an esoteric world of hidden spiritual reality, parallel to the reality of the zāhir, the ordinary visible world, which cloaked and concealed it. The

¹ Ibid. p. 80.

true function of scripture was to point to that hidden world even while keeping it distinguished in symbols.'

Tawil, the educing of the bāṭin from the zāhir text (tāwīl), was therefore as fundamental as tanzīl (the revelation of the literal sacred text). It was believed that for every prophet who was given tanzīl must be a person known as a waṣī (an executor, in the case of Muhammad, 'Alī)

Mankind, then were divided into khāṣṣ (the elite who know the bāṭin) and 'āmm (ordinary followers of the zāhir revelation). The former were considered representative of 'Alī and the sole authority source of ta'wīl. They believed in the hierarchical ranks (hudūd) of teachers who mediate between the imām and the simple novice.

The secret knowledge must not be given to the 'āmm. The Batini thus interpreted the Shi'ite principle of taḳiyya in the sense that it was obligating not to reveal the bāṭin to any unauthorised persons whether was any danger of persecution or not".¹

The Nizaris or the Assassins:

'Ubaydallāh al-Mahdī who rebelled in North Africa in the year 904 claimed himself to be the imām of the Fatimid regime and his descendants

¹ Encyclopaedia of Islam, art "Batiniya".

made Cairo as the centre of the caliphate. The Isma'ilis continued to flourish for seven generations without getting split into any sub-division. But when the seventh imām, al-Mustansir Bi'llāh Mu'idd Ibn 'Alī died, there arose a dispute among his sons Nizār and al-Musta'li for the post of imamate which led to the battle between the two brothers. The result was that Musta'li won and Nizār, his brother, was captured who died in the prison.

The dispute between the two brother led to the division of the Fatimids into the Nizārīs and the Musta'lis. The leader of the Nizārīs or the Assassins was Hasan al-Sabbāh (d.1124)¹ who was very close associate of al-Mustansir. Due to his support of Nizār, he was exiled from Egypt by al-Musta'li. He came to Persia and conquered the fort of Alamūt and established his rule. He called upon the people to join the Isma'ili faith. It is said that the motive of his movement (also known as the 'Neo-Isma'ilites')² was personal ambition and revenge. The term 'Assassins' came from the Arabic word "Hashish".³ In the beginning the movement was organised secretly, but it became very active in Syria in the in the last years of the eleventh century.

1 He was perhaps a Persian from Tus. He claimed his descent from the Himyarite Kings of South Arabia.

2 P.K. Hitti, Op.cit., p.556

3 Bernard Lewis, The Assassins (New York 1968) p.11.

It is generally believed that to achieve their aims, the members of this sect made free use of lethal weapons in killing their adversaries. They were ready to do whatever their chief ordered. They were free from the shackles of doctrines as they ignored all faiths and moralities. A group of Assassins appeared in the mask of a rigorous doctrine and severe¹ morals.

After his death in A.D. 1124, Buzurg Umīd Rūdbārī followed by his son Kiyā Muhammad, continue to ruled the country, in the manner of Hasan al-Sabbāh. The way of the Nazāris was changed when Hasan 'Alā Dhikrihi'l-Salam, the fourth ruler became one of Batinis 'Four other rulers Muhammad Ibn Alā Dhikruhi'l-Salām, Jalāl al-Dīn Hasan, 'Alā'al-Dīn, and Rukn al-Dīn Khurshāk, became Sultan and Imam one after another until Hulagu, the Mongol conqueror, invaded Persia.² He captured the Ismā'īlī forts and put³ all the Ismā'ilis to death, leveling their forts to ground.

In the next century, Āqa Khān of Muhalat in Persia who came from the Nizārīs uprose against Muhammad Shāh Qājār in Kirman in 1255/1839 but

1 Ibid., p. 12.

2 When the Mongols captured Masyad in 1260, The Syrian Assassins were scattered to Persia, Umam, Zanzibar and India.

3 Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī, Op.cit., p.81.

at last was defeated and escaped to Bombay. His propagation for the sake of Batini - Nizārīs, which started in Bombay, continued till now. At present the Nizārīs are known as Āqā Khānīds.

Although Nizārīs are the followers of the eleventh imām, they¹ stick themselves to the main dogma of the seveners.

The Musta'lis:

The Musta'lis were those who followed al-Musta'li. The line of their imamate continued in the reigns of the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt and came to an end in the year 556/1171. Later on the Bohra sect continued the same idea upto the present day.

The Druze:

The Druze are one of the Shi'ite sect. They are the followers of al-Hakīm (9196-1121) he succeeded the Fatimid caliphs and was only eleven years old when he ascended the throne. He followed extreme Ismailite doctrines. After sometime he declared himself the incarnation of the Diety and was so accepted by a newly organized sect called Druze, after

1 S.N. Fischer, Op.cit., p.108

its first great missionary, a Turk named al-Darazi (1019). Al Hākim was killed in 1021. In the word of Tabāṭabā'i: "The Druzes, who live in the Druze mountains in Syria (and also in Lebanon) were originally followers of the Fatimid Caliphs. But as a result of the missionary activity of Nashtakīn, the Druze joined the Batini sect. The Druze stop with the sixth Fatimid caliph al-Hākim Billāh, whom others believe to have been killed, and claim that he is in occultation. He has ascended to heaven¹ and will appear once again to the world."

The Muḡanna'ahs:

'Ata'l-Marwī known as al Muḡanna, the 'Veiled Prophet of Khurasan, was an Iranian who revolted against the Abbāsīd caliph al-Mahdī for years. He was a follower of Abū Muslim of Khurasan. When Abū Muslim died, he declared that the soul of Abū Muslim incarnated in his body and shortly after he claimed himself to be a Prophet. In the year 162/777 he was

¹ Abu Muslim was a Persian freedman. He had revolted in Khurasan to bring the Abbasid to power. But after coming to power the Abbasid caliphs al-Mansur betrayed him and executed treacherously. There arose a Khurrami sect led by the rebel Babik or Babak. The sect is so call because it arose from a district in Iran as a result of the execution of Abu Muslim. Some of the Khurramite believed that Abu Muslim was not death and that he will return to spread justice in the world. Mas'udi, vol.VI, p.186, Baghdadi, ed.Hitti, pp.162, seg: Fihrist, p.342. Cited by Hitti. Op.cit., p. 323.

surrounded in the fort of Kabash, Transoxiana. When he realized that he would be captured and killed, he then jumped, alongwith some of his followers, into fire and died. His diciples soon accepted Isma'ilism¹ and the method of the Batinis.

Development of the Shi'ite doctrine:

Imamate or caliphate in the sense of "supreme leadership" of the muslims community, formed a very important doctrine of the Shi'ites from the beginning. It lead to the division of the Shi'ites themselves into a number of branches.

The Shi'ites presented a concept of the imamate quite different from that of the Sunnis. For the Shi'ites the imām became as the imām ma'sūm (inpeccable and infallible) as well as the supreme interpreter of the Shari'a. 'This charismatic leader derived his power from his predecessor by virtue of an explicit nomination (nass), kept secret throughout the preceding reign and revealed only after the date of the caliph. by the man of trust to whom it had been confided.'²

1 Ibid., p. 82

2 Encyclopaedia of Islam, art. "Khalifa".

For those who believed in Hanafite, Malikite, or Hanbalite schools of thought, 'Alī was regarded as the last of the four orthodox caliphs (al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun), but the Shi'a held that 'Alī was the sole legitimate successor of the Prophet and the right was handed down to his son and their offsprings. From the very beginning there has been among the Shi'ites extremist groups who magnified 'Alī's nature until it assumed a devine¹ character.

The significance of imamate to the Shi'ite thought can be measured by their continuous attempts to incorporate it with the other "pillars" of Islam. For example, they added the formula 'Ali Waliallah to the traditional Shahada. 'There is the original formular of the Shahada. In one Shi'i tradition it is asserted that such a Shahada was proclaimed in this world immediately after its creation. In other tradition it is state that the walaya (principle of loyalty to Ali and other Imams) existed long before the creation of Adam, when all future generation of man were assembled at 'Arafa in the form of atoms (arants, dharr), they solemnly acknowledged not only Allah's divinity (as is stated in Qur'an)².

1 Edward G. Browne, A Literary History of Persia vol. II (Cambridge, 1956), p. 194. He writes that 'Even at the present day the 'Ali-Ilahis, who, as their name implies, regard 'Ali as neither more nor less than an incarnation or "Manifestation" of God.'

2 E. Kohlberg, 'Some Shi'a views of Antediluvian world'. Studia Islamica (1980), p. 44.

The believes of Shi'ites were opposed by the Sunnites. According to their (Shi'ite) theory the legitimate leadership of Muslim community was struck only to imām who was divinely appointed for the high post. the imām is a man who has a knowledge and also belongs to Muhammad's family through Fāṭima and 'Alī. The extremist Shi'ites even went so far as to believe that the imām, on account of this divine, and luminous essence, was the incarnation of God himself. 'To them Ali and his descendent imāms constitute a continuous divine revelation in human form. A later ultra-Shi'ite sect even held that Gabriel mistook Muhammad for 'Ali, who was originally intended for the reception of the revelation. In all this the Shi'ite stands in opposition to the Sunnite creed.'

The Zaydīs, unlike the Imamis, do not accept the heredity line of imām but were ready to support any member of the 'family' who became imām by revolting against the unlawful rulers. Some Zaydīs in the 4th century held that all descendants of 'Alī's father, Abū Talib, were eligible for the post of imām which generally was limited only for the descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.

The Zaydis were divided into two main groups, namely, the Batriyya and the jarudiyya. The Batriyya, like the moderate kufan Shi'a, believed in the imamate of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman till the first six years of

1 P.K. Hitti, Op.Cit., p. 248.

his rule on the ground that 'Alī had given his allegiance to them. They denied 'Uthman's right to the caliphate during the last six years of his rule. The Jarudiyya held radical ideas as they did not accept the three caliphs. They pointed out that 'Alī was designated as his executor (wagī) by the prophet and that most of the Companions of the Prophet had gone astray by following Abū Bakr and 'Umar.¹

The Zaydīs believed that the establishment of the imamate was compulsory for the community. They maintained that, after al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the imamate could be given to any descendant of Hasan and Husayn² who had adequate qualities. The qualities essential for the imām were the same as in the doctrines of the Sunnis and the Mu'tazilites. The imām must be equipped with religious knowledge and be able to give free judgement in law. Other qualities were piety, courage and moral integrity. Only the most excellent could be the rightful imām and if some one was more excellent than him and he rose up and claimed the imamate, the previous imām³ must give way to him.

1 Encyclopaedia of Islam, art. "Imama".

2 The Zaydites did not believe that 'Alī was the legitimate imam though they considered him as the most excellent (afdal).

3 Encyclopaedia of Islam, art. "Imama "

The basic conception of the imamate of the Imamiyya (or the twelvers) was founded by imām Ja'far al-Sadiq in A.D. 765. It was held that the imām was a necessary for the community because he was an infallible leader who would guide the people to righteous. They raised up the imām upto the level of the Prophet. The difference between the Prophet and the imām was in this only that the latter did not transmit a divine scripture. Therefore, one who disobeyed the imām was considered an infidel as one who disobeyed the Prophet. The basic character of the imām was that he must be "pure" from sin or any error. Though the imām had to take responsibility as a leader both in religious and political matters, his post did not depend on any of his actual rulings. According to the 'imami authoritative hadith':

"The world cannot exist for a moment without a hujjaja of God. There can be only a single imām at any time, though there may be a silent (sāmit) imām (his successor) besides him. The imāms are referred to in many passages of the Kur'ān by such terms as the "Light of God" His "witness". (Shuhada) among mankind, His "signs" (ālamāt), those "firm" (rasikhun) in knowledge etc. They are the "vicegerents" (khulafā) of God on earth, the "gates" (abwāb) through which he is approached, the heirs of the knowledge of the Prophet. The imāms are in possession of all revealed books. Only they have perfect knowledge of the Kur'ān in both its exoteric (ẓāhir) and esoteric (bātin) meaning. They have been given the "greatest name of God" (ism Allah al-āzam). They have inherited the arms of the Prophet and the books Ṣaḥifa, Djafr, Djamia and the Mushaf of Fātima containing secret knowledge. The knowledge of every imām is identical with the knowledge of the Prophet. Though the imāms are not endowed

with a native faculty of knowing the hidden (ghayb), they know "what has been and what will be". They have perfect knowledge of all crafts and all languages. God gives them knowledge of anything they desire to know. The imāms receive the perfect knowledge of his predecessor in the last moment of the latter's life. In the night of al-kadr of every year the imām receives the judgements of God concerning every event in the following year. The imām is spoken to (muhaddath) and informed (mufahham) by an angel, but unlike the rasūl does not see him. The imām is endowed with the holy spirit (rūḥ al-kuds).¹

The Isma'ilis maintained the idea that imāms are necessary for mankind. They ranked the imām below the natiq and the asās and above the hujja. He had the duty of explaining the meaning of the revealed law and also giving its interpretation.

According to the doctrine of the Kharijites, justice is the most necessary quality of an imām. An imām who violated the divine law must be expelled, even by force. They considered the unjust imām and his supporters as infidels unless they repented. The state of infidelity would also fall to any Muslim who do not detach himself from the unjust imām. Any Muslim who did not declare his support to the just imām would be held as an infidel. According to them, a non-Qurayshite or even a slave can become an imām.²

1 Encyclopaedia of Islam, art. "Imama"

2 Ibid.

CHAPTER - II

SHI'ISM UNDER THE SAFAVIDS

SHI'ISM UNDER THE ABBĀSIDS:

At the early part of the 8th century a strong propaganda was launched by the Hashimite family of the Abbasid branch in Khurāsān which¹ appealed to other Hashimites the Shi'ites and the Iranians.

The Abbāsids got victory by the support of several groups and each group considered it as its own victory. The Abbāsids had no interest in any of the groups because they were considered as merely a tool of gaining power. As Yahya Armajani writes: "Soon after the Abbāsids came to power they realized that it was not politically expedient to antagonize the majority Moslems in favour of the minority Shi'is and check their own pro-Shi'is proclivities. This did not endear them in the eyes of the

1 L.P. Elwell Sutton, Modern Iran (London, 1942), p. 40.

Shi'is, who thenceforth became the enemies of the caliphate."¹

Ultimately the Abbāsids got the caliphate in the name of the Prophet's family. At the beginning they expressed some sympathy with the people, especially to the progeny of the Prophet.

There was a strong sense prevailing among the Shi'ites to avenge the death of the Prophet's family and people secretly called upon to give their support to a number of the Prophet's family. But this instruction did not come from the imāms themselves.

In the early part of the 3rd/9th century, Shi'ism came to life again because many Greek philosophical and scientific books were translated into Arabic, so people engaged themselves with rational sciences. Al-Ma'mun, the Abbasid caliph who ruled from 198/813 to 218/833 favoured Mutazilite views. He thus supported the intellectualistic expressions. He granted the freedom of discussion and propagation about religious views. The Shi'ite theologians and learned men, therefore were very active in the propagation of Shi'ism. By the political force during that period, al-Ma'mun made the eighth Shi'ite imām his successor. This brought freedom to the descendants of the Prophet once again. Al - Ma'mun came so much under their influence

1 Yahya Armajani, Iran, (New Jersey, 1972), p.63.

that he raised the green flag of the Shi'ite . He went so far as to appoint the eight imām, 'Alī al-Razā, as his heir. The great uproar created by his act forced him to leave Baghdad.¹ Mutawakkil (233/847 - 246/861) held a special enmity against 'Alī and the Shi'ites. During his reign the immediate reversion to orthodox occurred. A strong reaction against the mutawakkilite doctrines led to indiscriminate persecution of every other sect in order to keep the steps with the nature of the Turkish praetorians who were growing during that time. The ruthless persecution of the Shi'ites¹ stirred up their latent hatred against the 'Abbāsīd rule and must have furthered dissemination'.²

In the 10th century, because of the weakness of the Abbāsīd government and the coming into existence of the Buvid rulers, Shi'ism was able to rise up again and to spread their faith all over. The Buvids who were also Shi'ite, got influence both in Baghdad, the capital, and in the provinces of Iran. This made Shi'ites able to stand against their enemies who formerly tried to use the caliphate's power to destroy them and they were free to propagate their faith openly.

SHI'ISM UNDER THE SAFAVIDS :³

In Iran the survival of a Shi'ite nucleus helped the formation of Shi'ites and Sayyed communities in certain towns, such as Qom Ray.

1 Yahya Armajani, Op. Cit. p.64

2 Amir Hasan Siddiqi, Caliphate and Kingship in Medieval Persia (Lahore, 1942), p.4

3 The rulers of the Safavids dynasty that ruled from 1501-1722.

Qazvīn and Nīsāpūr, these towns kept Shi'ism alive in Iran until the triumph of the Safavids. several centuries later, when Shi'ism was imposed¹ on the Sunnite majority as the official religion of the whole land.

E.G. Browne, writing about the Safavids, says :

2

"The rise of the Safavi dynasty in Persia at the beginning of the sixteenth century of the Christian era was an event of the greatest historical importance. not only to Persia herself and his immediate neighbours, but to Europe generally it marks not only the restoration of the Persian Empire and the recreation of the Persian nationality after an eclipse of more than eight centuries and a half but the entrance of Persia into the comity of nations and the genesis of political relations which still to considerable extent hold good".³

The origin of Safavids are still obscure. It is not certain whether the family came from Kurdistān or from any other place. It seems certain that the Safavids spoke Āzari which is a form of Turkish used in Āzarbāyjan. However, they were a native of Iranians stock. It has been said that the Safavids, after, establishing their own state, tried to falsify evidence of their origin. As Savorv writes :

"Their fundamental object in claiming a Shī'ī origin was to differentiate themselves from the Ottomans and to enable them to enlist the sympathies of all heterodox elements. To this end they systematically destroyed any evidence which indicated

1 Yahya Armajani, Op. Cit., p.64

2 Safavi is the adjective formed from Safī who was a Sūfī saint Safī-yūd-Dīn, who died in Gilān in A.D. 1334 at the age of 85. He claimed to be the descendant 'in the twentieth degree from Mūsa Kāzīm the seventh Imām'.

3 E.G. Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol. IV (Cambridge, 1978) p.3.

that Shaykh Safī al-Dīn Ishāq, the founder of the Safavid tarīqa was not a Shī'ī (he was probably a Sunni of Shafī'ī madhhab), and they fabricated evidence to prove that the Safavids were Savvids, that is, direct descendants of the Prophet. They constructed a dubious genealogy tracing the descent of the safavid family from the seventh of the Twelver Imāms, Mūsā al-Kāzim- a genealogy which is sedulously followed by the later Safavid sources and introduced into the text of a hagiological work on the life of Shaykh Safī al-Dīn, a number of anecdotes designed to validate the safavid claim to be savvids. Viewed dispassionately, the majority of these anecdotes appear ingenuous, not to say naive".¹

Right from 700/130 to 850/144 the Safavid Shavkhs of Ardabīl wanted to spread their influence. Safī al-Dīn changed the form of the Safavids, a ṣūfī order of local importance people into a strong religious movement whose influence was not only confined to the borders of Iran, but spread to Syria and eastern Anatolia as well.

Safī al-Dīn's death in 735/1334 coincided with the disintegration of the Mongol empire of the Il-Khāns. For about fifty years, Persia was in great turmoil. Twenty years later the Turco - Mongol forces (Tatars) led by Tīmūr invaded the country. During the period of anarchy Safī al-Dīn's son, Ṣadr al-Dīn Mūsā, succeeded in protecting the lands which belonged to Ardabīl sanctuary.² He received a visit from Tamerlane.

The next head of the family was Khawāja 'Alī who was known as the "Shavkh of Persia".³ The political ambition of the Khawāja 'Alī, the grandson of Shavkh Safī, led to a conflict with the ruling class in

¹ R.M. Savory, "Safavid Persia" The Cambridge History of Islam, Vol.1 (Cambridge, 1970), p.394.

² Ibid., pp. 395 - 396

³ Percy Sykes, A History of Persia Vol. 2 (London, 1969), p.158.

Iran - the Qara-Qovunlu¹ the black-sheep Turcomans. He was sent to exile, took refuge at Divār Bakr. at the court of Uzun Hasan who was the ruler of Aq-Qovunlu, the white-sheep of the Turcomans. Khawāja 'Alī was the first ruler of the family who gave a true evidence of being a Shī'a. However, his views and those of his followers remained tolerant and non-violent. Khawāja 'Alī died in the year 1427.

Khawāja 'Alī's grandson, Junayd, was the centre of great attraction and a large number of people became his disciples. Because of this Jahan Shāh, the Qoro Qovunlu prince sent him to exile.² There emerged a movement which became strong under the leadership of Junayd (851-64/1447-60), who unlike his predecessor, aspired for temporal as well as spiritual authority.

The Safavid order became Shī'ite in the reign of Shaykh Ibrāhīm, Junayd's father, with an extremism tendency. Shi'ism became militant because Shaykh Junayd instructed his followers to fight for power.³

To quote Savory again:

"Logically the Shī'i Safavids should have had more in common with the Shī'i Qora-Qovunlu than with the Sunnī Aq Kovunlu, but at that time the dominant political power in

1 The ruling class in Persia were the Qara Qovunlu - the Black sheep Turcomans. Uzun Hasan, at Divar Bakr, was the ruler of Aq Qovunlu - the white sheep of Turcomans.

2 Percy Sykes. Op. cit., p.158

3 Ann K.S. Lambton. State and Government in Medieval Islam (Oxford, 1981), p.265.

Persia and the eastern Fertile Crescent was the Kora-Koyunlu state, and the Safavids and the Ak-Koyunlu sank their religious antipathy in a political alliance cemented by Junayd's marriage to Uzun Hassan's sister in 868/1459. Junayd made an abortive attempt to recover Adabil. The following year, on his way to attack the Circassians, he was attacked by the ruler of Shiravan, and killed."¹

Junayd's son, Hyder had a war like spirit. His uncle Uzun Hasan gave him a daughter by the Greek princess whose name was Martha. She gave him three sons, Sultan 'Alī, Ibrāhīm Mirza and Shāh Ismā'īl. Shāh Ismā'īl later became the founder of the Safavid dynasty. Later on in 1486 Hyder was also killed like his father Junayd, by Shirvān Shāh.

In the reign of Hyder, the Sufī Khulafa came from every direction and foolishly announced the glad tidings of his divinity² (ulūhiyat). When Hyder died, within a short period many Safavid disciples got together at Ardabil and made his son, 'Alī as the leader of the order. At the same time they supported him to avenge for his father and grandfather. Ya'qūb, the Aq-Qoyunlu ruler was alerted by this plan, he then seized 'Alī, together with his two brothers, Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl and their mother, and put them in a prison in Fars for four and a half years (894-8/1484-93). Rustam, the Aq-Qoyunlu prince, released 'Alī in the 898/1493 on the basis that the Safavids force would help him to fight against his cousin and the enemies for

¹ R.M. Savory, Op. cit., p.396

² M. Mozzaoui, The Origins of the Safavids (Wiesbaden, 1972), p.72.

his throne. When Rustam came to power by defeating his cousin, 'Alī returned to Ardabīl.

Rustam re-arrested 'Alī because he realized that he had released the wrong person. He took 'Alī to Khoy but 'Alī managed to escape to Ardabīl. 'Alī knew that his death would come soon. he then appointed his younger brother, Ismā'īl, to succeed him and told Ismā'īl, to escape to Ardabīl. 'Alī was attacked by Aq-Qoyunlu forces and was killed. Ismā'īl was followed by Aq-Qoyunlu at Ardabīl so he went to Gīlān and took shelter at Lāhījān.

In Gīlān, Ismā'īl together with his devout followers made a plan to attack Aq-Qoyunlu's empire. He has a close contact with his disciples in Āzarbāyjān, Syria and Anatolia. His forces attacked the ruler of Shīrvān who was the old enemy and went further to Āzarbāyjan and attacked Aq-Qoyunlu forces. In the year 906/1501 Ismā'īl reached Tabrīz he then announced himself to be Shāh Ismā'īl which was the first ruler of the empire which had an authority only in Āzarbāyjan.¹

Shah Ismā'īl's first action after his succession, was 'the first proclamation of the Shī'ī form of Islam as the religion of the new state was unquestionably the most significant act of his whole reign'.²

As Lockhart wrote. Isma'il, by means of his skilful propaganda

1 R. Savorv, Op. cit., pp. 397-398.

2 Ibid., p. 398

was able to attract to his banner many Shi'a Turcomans from Asia Minor, Cilicia and Syria. He owed and gained a large success with a great support from Turcoman military tribes of the Takkālū, Dhu'l Qadar Shāmlu¹ Rūmlū, Ustājlu, Afshār, Qājār and Varsaq

Thus, when 'Isma'īl came to power he determined that the Ithnā' Asharīya Shi'ism should be the religion of the state. This policy created rivalry among the Shi'ite divines who said that the Sunnis were more in number. But at last Shāh Isma'īl won in introducing Shi'ism as the religion of Persia. The majority of the Iranians might have been Sunnis at the time Shah Isma'il ascended the throne. Though the Shi'ites were strongest among the population who spoke Turkish at that time, two third of the population in the city of Tabriz, the place of crowning, were Sunnis. The Safavids had a strong policy to make Shi'ism as the state religion, and this brought a quick change.²

In 1501, Shāh Isma'īl proclaimed that the Ithnā' Asharī, or the 'twelver' form of Shi'ism was to be, not only the official religion of the Safavid state, but also a tolerant creed.

E.G. Browne writes :

"This decision caused anxiety even to some of the Shi'a divines of Tabriz, who on the night preceding Isma'īl's

¹ Laurence Lockhart, the fall of the Safavi Dynasty and Afghans of Persia (Cambridge 1958) p.19.

² Hossein Nasr "Religion in Safavid Persia" Iranian Studies vol. VII Winter-spring 1974 Number 1-2. pp. 273-274.

coronation, represented to him that of the two or three hundred thousand inhabitants of that city at least two-thirds were Sunnīs, that the Shi'a formula had not been publicly uttered from the pulpit since the time of the Imāms themselves, and that if the majority of the people refused to accept a Shi'a ruler, it would be difficult to deal with the situation which would then arise. To this Shāh Isma'il replied, "I am committed to this action; God and the Immaculate Imāms are with me, and I fear no one; by God's help, if the people utter one word of protest I will draw the sword and leave not one of them alive. Nor did he content himself with glorifying 'Alī and his descendants, but ordained the public cursing of the first three Caliphs of the Sunnīs, Abū'Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, and that all who heard the cursing should respond "May it be more, or less ! " (Bish bā'd, Kam ma-bād !) or suffer death in case of refusal.

Immediately after his coronation, according to the Aḥsanu't - Tawārikh, he ordered all preachers (Khutabā) throughout his realms to introduce the distinctively Shi'a formulae "I bear witness that 'Alī is the Friend of God" and hasten to the best of deeds (hayya ila Khayri'l-'amal) into the profession of Faith and the call of Prayer respectively; which formulae had been in abeyance since Tughril Beg the Saljūg had put to flight and Slain al-Basāsī'rī five hundred and twenty eight years previously. He also instituted the public cursing of Abū'Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān in the street and markets, as above mentioned, threatening recalcitrants with decapitation. Owing to the dearth of Shi'a theological works the religious instruction of the people necessitated by the change of doctrine presented great difficulties, but finally the Qadī Naṣrullāh Zavtūnī produced from his library the first volume of the Qawā'idul Islām ("Rules of Islām") of Shavkh Jamal'ud-Din ibn Alī Ibnū'l Muṭahhir al Hilli, which served as a basis of instruction "until day by day the Sun of Truth of the Doctrine of the Twelve [Imāms] increased its altitude, and all parts and regions of the world became illuminated by the dawning effulgences of the Path of Verification."¹

By imposing Ithnā' Ashari Shi'ism as the Official religion of the state, Isma'il created a stronger and more centralized government.

¹ E.G. Browne, Op. cit., pp. 53-55

This was followed, by consistent propaganda of Shi'ism. As there was shortage of Shi'ites 'ulamā' in Iran, some Shi'ites theologians were imported from Syria. Ismā'il appointed an officer known as the sadr whose purpose was to supervise the propagation of Shi'ism. Although the office of sadr existed in the Timurid and Turcoman states; but under the Safavids the sadr was a 'political appointee'. and he was used for controlling the religious communities of Iran. The 'Safavids equated belief in the right religion with loyalty to the state', and thus did not tolerate heresy, and it was task of the sadr to check it. Thus Shi'ism became the most dominant form of Islam in Iran.

Within ten years of his rule on Tabriz, Shāh Ismā'il conquered the whole of Persia including the Fertile Crescent. The forces of Aq-Qoyunlu which remained near Hamadan were defeated by him. It paved the way for Ismā'il to reach central and southern Iran. He conquered the Caspian province, Māzandarān and Gūrgān, Baghdad, south-west Persia (414/1508), and Shīrvān (915/1509-10) and then Khurasan (916/1510):

During the sixteenth century the Safavids had to fight with the two powerful enemies : One was the Ūzbegs in the east and the other was

1 R. Savory, Iran under the Safavids (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 30.

2 Hossen Nasr, Op. cit., p. 274

3 R. Savory " Safavid Persia", Op. cit., p. 299

the Ottomans in the west, and finally in 920/1514, the war between the Safavids and the Ottoman empire broke out. The Sultan of Turkey felt delighted by the victory of Shāh Ismā'il, particularly the victory over Shev Bani Khan. But the relations afterwards deteriorated when the Ottoman Sultan, Salim I "Yazuz" came to power in the year 1512. Ismā'il's challenge to the Ottoman power in 918/1512 led to the execution of a large number of the Shi'ites, in Anatolia.¹

The last ten years of Ismā'il's life passed without any battle. He lost his personal prestige, and succumbed to the power of the chiefs of Turcoman tribes and high ranking Iranian officials. After Ismā'il Tahmāsp I succeeded him in 930/1524, Tahmāsp got no chance to do any thing because the Qizibash authorities were controlling the state. Although Ismā'il's crushing defeat at Chaldirān prevented him from realising his ambition of extending Shi'ism beyond the borders of his kingdom, however. Shāh Ismā'il and Shah Tahmāsp I (1524-70) maintained its supremacy in Persia.

Shāh Ismā'il had established a kind of feudal aristocracy by his grants of land to tribal chiefs. They did not owe fealty to him as their sovereign or overlord, but revered him as their spiritual head, while some of his followers even regarded him as a god, a belief which he

¹ Ibid., pp. 399-400.

himself shared, as is evident from some of his Turkish poems. 'What therefore developed in Iran was an extension, on a nation-wide scale, of the small theocratic state over which his predecessors had ruled at Ardabil. When in times of crisis the Shāh found himself in need of military aid, he would invoke the principle of Shāhī-sevan'.

In the words of R. Savory :

"The Safavid state at its inception had a theocratic form of government. There was no formal boundary between the religious and the political aspect of the state. Consequently the highest officer of state, termed Wakīl-i-nafis-i-humājūn, or vicegerent of the Shah, represented the ruler in both his religious and his political capacity. He was the Shah's alter ego, and was responsible for the orderly arrangement of the affairs of religion and the state. The first holder of this office was a high ranking Qizilbāsh officer of the Shāmlū Tribe, one of the small group of trusted companions who had been with Ismā'il in Gilān and had planned the final stages of the Safavids revolution. Since the Qizilbāsh constituted the backbone of the Safavid fighting forces, they considered it proper that the wakīl should be drawn from their ranks. They also considered as their prerogative the post of amīr al-umārā, or commander-in-chief of Qizilbāsh tribal forces. To begin with, the same man seems to have held both these high offices. The qurchī bāshī, a high ranking military officer whose function during the early Safavid period is extremely obscure, was also Qizilbāsh chief.

The two remaining principal offices of state were filled by Persians. One was the office of Wazīr, traditionally in medieval Islamic states the first minister and head of the bureaucracy. In the early Safavid state the importance of the wazīr was greatly reduced by the creation of the office of wakīl, and by the intervention of the amīr al-umārā in political affairs. The other was the office of sadr who was

1 Laurence Lockhart Op. Cit., p.20.

the head of the religious institution, and whose prime task after the establishment of the Safavid state was to impose doctrinal unity on Persia by the energetic propagation of Twelver Shi'ism - a task which was virtually completed by the death of Ismā'īl I.

Within a short time, friction developed between the Turcoman and the Persian elements in the administration. The friction was aggravated by the lack of any clear definition of the function of the principal officers of state. This confusion of function and overlapping of authority derived in part from the circumstances which attended the rise to power of the Safavids and in part from the predominantly military character of the early Safavid state.¹

After the death of Ismā'īl in 930/1524 all the other Safavid rulers till the 12th/ 18th century accepted Shi'ism as the official religion and made it strong in their land. When they were at the peak of their power during the period of Shāh Abbās, the Safavids extended far beyond. Shāh Abbās tried hard to follow the Safavid Shaykh of Ardabīl and to pay his respect to the imām. He always went to visit his ancestor's tombs at Ardabīl before taking up important works. He frequented the shrine of imām Rezā at Marshad, and undertook a pilgrimage on foot within twenty eight days² starting from Isfahan to Marshad in the year 1010/1601 .

The Safavid rule proved to be a turning point in the history of Iran and also marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of Islam in that country. This period was preceded by a series of religious and

1 R. Savory, Op. Cit., pp. 401-402.

2 Encyclopaedia of Iranica, art. "Abbas".

and intellectual activities preparing the ground for establishing Shi'ite order in Persia and the transformation of the country into a predominant Shi'ite area.¹ Religion played an important role in the struggle between Persia and Turkey during the reign of Shāh Abbās but the role of religion at that time was not so important.² "In fact Persia under him, ceased to be a theocratic state, becoming instead an absolute monarchy on normal oriental line."³ In the early fifteenth century, the Safavids were only the pirs and murshids, i.e. the spiritual leaders of the Sufi order who had their followers from Turkey and Iran. They preached their doctrine effortlessly. The disciples of this Sufi order spread to Anatolia, and many tribes of Turcoman favoured this order. When these men created the political agitations and anarchy in the fifteenth century, the 'khanoah' of the descendants of Safi al-Din became the shelter for several people.

It seems to be around this time that the Safaviyya order accepted Shi'ism. Later, their leader had a role in politics (1447-59) for the

1 Hossein Nasr. "Religion in Safavid Persia" Iranian Studies Vol. VII (1974), p.271.

2 Laurence Loc khart Op.cit... p.21.

3 Ibid... p.21.

purpose of protecting his followers from the hands of the Sunni leaders.

To quote R. Savory again :

"The imposition of Shi'ism on a country officially at least was still predominantly Sunnī, obviously could not be achieved without incurring opposition; or without a measure of persecution of those who refused to conform. Disobedience was punishable by death, and the threat of force was there from the beginning. As far as the ordinary people were concerned, the existence of this threat seems to have been sufficient. The 'ulama were more stubborn. Some were put to death; many more fled to areas where Sunnism still prevailed".¹

Even in the early days of the Safavids state, when revolutionary fervour was still strong, great emphasis was placed on ritual cursing. Safavid supporters known as tabarrā'iyān, walked through the streets and bazaars cursing not only the first three calips but also all enemies of 'Alī and other imāms.² and the Sunnīs. Immediately after his coronation Ismā'il ordered that all the preachers throughout his realms should introduce the distinctively Shi'a formulae : "I bear witness that 'Alī is the friend of God" and hasten to the best of deeds" (hayva ila khayr il-amal)³ into the profession of Faith and the call to prayer respectively.

The theocratic nature of the Safavids state made the Shāh the apex of the whole administrative set up. His rule was in theory absolute. He

¹Loc. Cit., p. 398.

² R. Savory, Iran Under Safavids, Op. cit., pp. 27-28.

³ E.G. Browne, Op. Cit., p. 54.

was the living emanation of the godhead, the Shadow of God upon earth. Since the ruler was considered to be directly appointed by God, his subjects were required to obey his commands whether these be just or unjust. As the representative of the Mahdi, the Safavid Shāh was closer to the source of absolute truth than were other men, and consequently the disobedience on the part of his subjects was considered sinful. The Sunni idea that the kings were the God's shadow on earth was agreed by some of the Safavid 'ulamā'. The obvious contradiction between this idea and the belief in the mystery of the imām did not do any good to the prestige of the rulers. The need of the political and economic as well as the threat from the united strength of the Sunni threatening against Shi'ism from Turkey and Transoxiana necessitated the obedience to the rulers.¹

It appears from Shah Ismā'il's poetry 'that he regarded his rank as even more exalted. Under the Safavids the ruler was assumed to be the representative of the Hidden Imām, and even attributes of the Imāms tended to be transferred to him'.²

Fadl Allah b. Ruzbihān considered Ismā'īl a leader of the heretics who called himself 'God' and called his son the Son of God.³

1 Savyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, Op. Cit., P. 123.

2 Hamid Algar, Op. Cit., p. 22

3 Ann K.S. Lambton, Op. Cit., p. 265.

The Safavids followed the religious and political trends of the Sunnis. They had the position of Sadr Sheikhul-Islam, Imam-i-juma the Gazis and Mohtasibs. Some members among the early period of the Safavid time came from outside and they almost depended themselves on the post given by the government.

By political reasons, the Safavid rulers needed the Mujtahids and the 'ulamā' to maintain religious conformity. The officials of the religious institution encouraged Shi'ism of the imamirite which was not established by the ghulat of the Safavid order but by the great mujtahids of the former days. The Shi'ite 'ulamā' became public officers and used the state machinery for enforcement of their orders. Shi'ism, therefore, entered the state affairs and the religious institution came under the political institution though the mujtahids were still, in some degree, free. This freedom became greater in the late 11th/17th century to the extent that the most powerful rulers showed their respect to them. For instance Shāh Tahmasp¹ was under the influence of Husayn al-Husayni al-Karaki al-Amili as Shāh Sultan Husayn (1105-/35/1694/1722) was under the influence of Bāqir Majlisī.²

¹ Husayn al-Husayni al-Karaki al-'Amili was the grandson of Shaykh 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Alī al-Karaki.

² Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī held the grand office of Shaykh al-Islam under Shāh Safi (Sulaymān) and Shāh Sultān Husayn Majlisī violently opposed to both the Sunnis and the Sūfis and condemned the philosophers as followers of infidel Greeks.

About the Shi'ism under Safavids Hamid Algar writes :

"The persecution of Sufism and Sunnism, dominated the last thirty years of the Safavid rule and, ironically, contributed to the fall of the Shi'i-Iranian state 1722. The ascendancy of the ulama over Shah Sultān Husayn (1105/1694-1135/1722), last of the ruling Safavid monarchs, represented a reversal of the usual roles of ulama and state. The post of mullābāshī (chief mullā) created by Shah Sultān Husayn supereded in importance that of sadr; its occupation by Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1111/1700) and his grandson Mīr Muhammad Husayn Majlisī successively, marked a revival of the militancy of the earlier Safavid period. This revival followed rigid, formalistic lines, such as might be expected to characterize an assertion of scholastic orthodoxy. The convent of the Sufi Mullā Muhsin Fayd Kashānī was destroyed, and the dervishes who inhabited it were massacred. This act might almost be held to be a symbolic destruction of one of the foundations of the Safavid dynasty : the first elder of the order had been Shayk Safī (d. 735/1334) and when later the Safavid prince Tahmasp Mirza was attempting to regain the throne, the Shahsavan tribes refused him their assistance precisely because of their continuing attachment to Sufism".¹

The end of the Safavid dynasty came at the hands of the Afghans who attacked Iran in 1722. Under the Afghans Shi'ism lost its preeminence. Its status was not more than one of the four Sunni schools. However, Shi'ism emerged 'from the interregnum between Safavid and Qajar rule with increased strength'.

¹ Hamid Algar, Op. Cit., pp. 29-30.

CHAPTER - III

THE RISE OF THE MUJTAHIDS

The twelver Shi'ites expressed an idea about the God-ruler in Islam in the sense that it is God who rules the community and he had chosen Prophet Muḥammad as his representative on the earth to perform His authority. The Prophet had two important attributes, he was designated by God, and he was infallible. Thus it is necessary for the successors of the Prophet to have these two qualities. It means that God has to appoint the infallible individuals as imāms.

The appointment was first made by the Prophet himself when he appointed 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalib, who was considered to be infallible, as his successor. This tradition was followed by the twelver Shi'ites. The imāms who were the descendants of 'Alī and Fātimah were the genuine
1
representatives of God on earth.

1 The legitimate and infallible imāms approved by the twelver Shi'ites were : 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalib, al-Murtadā, Ḥasan b., 'Alī al-Muṭṭabā, Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, Sa'wīd al-Shuhadā' 'Alī, Ibn al-Ḥusayn, Zayn al-'Ābidīn, Muḥammad b. 'Alī, al-Bāqir, Ja'far b. Muḥammad al Sādiq, Mūsā b. Ja'far, al-Kāzim, 'Alī b. Mūsā, al Ridā, Muḥammad b. 'Alī, al-Taqī, 'Alī b. Muḥammad, al-Naqī, Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Askarī and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, al-Mehdī.

After the death of Hasan al-'Askarī, the eleventh imām, in 837, the period of the infallible imāms ended. According to the Shi'ite belief the twelfth imām remained hidden as a living person, but the work of ruling was continued by four specified persons who were appointed by him, namely, Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān b. Sa'id-al 'Amri, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Uthmān b. Sa'id al-'Amri, Abū al-Qāsim, al-Ḥusayn b. Rūth Nawbakhtī, and Abū al-Hasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Samarī. After these specified agents, the ruling of temporal and religious matters were given to the qualified 'ulamā' and the leading among them were known as marja'i taqlīd¹ ('The authorities chosen to be followed') or muqallads ('those who are followed'), and their adherents were known as muqallids ('followers').

The idea of rulerships was increasingly important in the Shi'ite fiqh, hadīth, and kalām, for the idea of rulership became predominant among the Mujtahids. Their claim to the rulership was based on the hadīth according to which the Prophet is reported to have said :

"May God be compassionate to my caliphs those who will come after me and will deal with my hadīth and sunnah".²

As regards the matter of political authority Shavkh Murtazā Anṣarī writes :

1 Marja'i-taqlīd : a mujtahid whose practice and pronouncements furnish a binding example for those unable to exert independent judgement in matters relating the religious law.

2 Mu'anī, pp. 374-75 cited by Abdul Hadi Hairi, Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran (Leiden E.J. Brill, 1977), p. 59.

'There are three offices : (1) the office which deals with religious matters; this office belongs to the faqīh without any question. (2) the administration of justice; this institution has been also unquestionably entrusted to the mujtahid; (3) the third office is that of politics, that is, rulership; the idea of its being under the authority of the 'ulama' is not accepted by all, and therefore it does require discussion.'

Right from the sixteenth century there appeared a movement known² as Ak bārīs which questioned or refused the claims of the Mujtahids.

The eighteenth century saw a new Shi'ites school of thought known as³ Uṣūlī triumphed over the Akbarī movement. Though both came from the same background, the uṣūlīs or Muhtahids were those who claimed the main role of interpreting laws and doctrines of Mujtahids. Every believer has to choose one living mujtahid for himself whose guidance and judgement he has to follow. The doctrine gave the living Shi'ite mujtahids more power than the sunni 'ulamā' and gave them rights beyond those which were fixed by the state. The Akbārīs, who depended only on the Qur'a and Sunnah,⁴ were generally defeated in the 18th century.

1 Shavkh Murtazā Ansari Al-Makāsib, (Tabriz, 1955), p. 153.
Cited by Abdul-Hadi Hairi, p. 60.

2 Akbārīs : A school established in 1624 A.D. that held the institution of mujtahid an invalid feature of shi'ism and minimized the clergy's role.

3 Uṣūlīs : A school established under the leadership of Āghā Muḥammad Baqir (Vahid) Bihbihani (1705-1803) that insisted on the doctrine of ijtihād, the necessary of the role of the mujtahid and a broader role for the Ulamā in society.

4 Nikki R. Keddie (ed.), 'The Roots of Ulama's Power in Modern Iran' in Scholar. Saints and Sufis (University of California Press, 1972), p. 224.

The Uṣūlī greatly emphasized the role of the living mujtahids. For them the ijtihād made by the mujtahids must be obeyed by their followers. The mujtahids had direct influence, personally and politically, over his¹ followers due to this doctrine.

In the Qajar period the 'ulamā' were more active with the change. They were involved in the fighting with the government. This emphasized the activities of the mujtahids who guided and ruled the community. This action was not openly practiced by the 'ulamā' of the Safavid period. The 'ulamā' who already proclaimed themselves as regents of the imāms could not recognize monarchy which was considered illegal. The conflict between the² religious and secular powers continued for the whole nineteenth century.

Nikki R. Keddie writes :

'The high and assured income of the ulama seems to have had its roots both in doctrine that assured the ulama administration of the Islamic Khums tax, and Safavid practices. In establishing officially favoured ulama, whom they saw as key supporters and not as potential rivals, the Safavids stressed the obligatory nature of large alms to be administered by the ulama, which the Qajars had to follow in order to get any cooperation from them.'³

The submission of state to religious authority as happened in the time of Fath' Alī Shāh was successful only for the short time. Generally

¹ Ibid., p. 223

² Hamid Algar, Op.Cit. p.22

³ Loc. Cit. p.225.

the 'ulamā' kept themselves away from the state. Since the state was an agent of tyranny, those 'ulamā' who had a close contact with the state were believed to be unfit for the post of marja'i taqlīd. Anyhow, by the end of the nineteenth century the cooperation between the 'ulamā' and the state came into existence. But since the state was considered to be an agent of injustice, those who had cooperated with the state were considered to have rejected their faith.

The mujtahids' power became stronger with the coming into existence of the Qajar rule. A large number of mujtahids who stayed in Najaf and Karbala came back to Iran and displayed their influence.

During the period of Fath 'Alī Shāh (1797 - 1834) many of the famous 'ulamā' were involved in the political life of the country. The Shāh supported the 'ulamā' to settle in different parts of the country and offered money to them in order to gain their sympathy.

Not only did Fath 'Alī Shah show his dedication towards the 'ulamā' he also established the post of shaykh al-Islām and imām Juma'.

As one writer says :

'The major ulama of this period were not only outside the state apparatus but also most of them resided in Iraq outside the state's jurisdiction.'³

1 James Alban Bill Politics of Iran (Columbus, Ohio 1972). p. 23

2 Hamid Algar. Op. Cit. p.50.

3 Moojan Momen. An Introduction to Shi'i Islam (Yale University press, 1955). p.137

The 'ulamā' did not want to join the government and hesitated to act on behalf of the Shāh.

In the beginning the 'ulamā's influence was confined to the urban population. Marvin Zonis writes : 'In contrast to the non religious elite, the majority of the population of Iran, or at least the urban, mobilized segment of the population, are allegedly committed Shi'ites. Certainly there exists a highly vocal (albeit privately highly vocal) cadre of religious leaders and activists who have immense influence with the urban population and who are unalterably hostile to the elite in this regime. Moreover there is a long and revered tradition of religious officials leading mass movement into the midst of major political controversy'.¹ However, as regards the relation between the tribes in Khurasan and the 'ulamā' the tribal people paid great respect to the 'ulamā'. They authorised the 'ulamā' to act on their behalf.

The important centre of the mujtahids in Iran was Isfahan. In the early period this city was the capital of the Safavid dynasty. It remained the religious capital of the country upto the period of Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh. The 'ulamā' from various parts of the country were attracted to this place.²

The general atmosphere during the reign of 'Abbās Mirzā, a successor of Fath' 'Alī Shāh, also enhanced the influence of the 'ulamā' over the government. 'Abbās Mirzā gave special consideration to the

¹ Marvin Zonis, The political Elite of Iran (Princeton University, 1971), pp. 150-151

² Hamid Algar, Op. Cit., p. 58.

religious minorities and asked for the cooperation of the 'ulamā' to protect these people. He aimed at modernizing the country which meant giving the state more privileges. This was opposed by the 'ulamā'. In the end he realized that the policies which he had adopted to please the 'ulamā' had failed because the 'ulamā' were no more useful to him.

THE ROLE OF 'ULAMĀ' AT THE BEGINNING OF NĀSIR AL-DĪN SHĀH'S TIME :

The chaos spread all over the country after the death of Muḥammad Shāh till Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh came to power.

During the period of Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh (1848-1896), the power remained with the 'ulamā'. The attempt to westernize became the main¹ cause of mistrust of the 'ulamā'.

When the state failed to use force to the people, they turned more attention to the foreign power for support. The 'ulamā' opposed the foreign powers as infidels. They believed that it was their religious duty to oppose them. The power of the 'ulamā' as a political force continued to grow.

BĀBĪSM AND BAHĀ'Ī MOVEMENT :

In the Qajar period, the people were interested in mysticism and

¹ Hamid Algar, Op. cit., p. 122.

magic. This situation emerges from the Sheikhivva movement.

The Shi'ites held that the founder of the Bābism sect Sawvid 'Alī Bāb, based his doctrine on the teaching of the later leader of the Sheikhivva movement, Sawvid Kazim Reshti because he attended his lecture² in Karbala.

Sawvid 'Alī Muhammad was born in Shiraz in 1819. In 1844 he called his disciples and declared himself as the Bāb (The Gate to the unseen Mahdi). In 1848 (in the convention of Badash) the Bābīs declared their retreat from Islam and Shari'a soon as a result of the presecution from the orthodox Shi'ites one of the leaders in this movement was a poetess named Zarrin Taj or Qurratul - 'Ayn or Janab-e Tahira (Her Holiness the Pure). She unveiled herself in front of her men followers against the traditional teaching of Islam. After the convention, in 1849 one of the leaders of the Bāb movement took a small troop of Bābīs into the sanctuary of Shyikh Tabari to fight bravely with the troop of Nāsir-al-Dīn Shāh who came to subjugate them. Their leader, Mullā Husavn, was killed and the others surrendered to the Shāh on the condition that their lives would be spared. Instead they were mercilessly massacred. Soon after that, in January 1850, another leader Sawvid Yahvā Darābī led the Bābīs group to fight bravely with the Shāh's troop in the Kil'a-i- Alī Mardān Khan citadel and all of them were massacred. ('Alī Muhammad was shot dead). On 16 August

1 The founder of the Sheikhivva movement was Shyikh Ahmad Ahsai who believed only in spiritual resurrection. He gave mystical and spiritual meaning to the shari'ah in expounding his doctrine. He also believed that the twelfth imām lived only spiritually and he might reappear near the Day of Judgement.

2 Sawvid Athar Abbas Rizvi, Op. Cit., pp. 138-139.

1852 the two Bābis attempted upon the life of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh Qajar but did not succeed. Qurratul-'Ayn was asserted an imprisoned and finally strangled to death. The Bābi leaders were banished to Iraq. One among them was Bahā 'Allāh (Mīrzā Husayn 'Alī Nūrī) and another was his half-brother, Subh-e Azal (Mīrzā Yahvā Nūrī). Subh Azal claimed that the Bāb had appointed him as his successor. He together with his followers adhered to the teaching stated in the Bayan, a part of work written by the Bāb, so they were called Bayanis. Bahā 'Allāh protested this claim and in 1863 he declared in a garden near Baghdad (the Garden of Ridwān) that the Bāb had given him the honour of "He whom God shall Make Manifest". So other claims of succession to the Bab were false. So he was the founder of Bahāism (which derived from the Bābīsm).

The Iranian Shi'ites consider the Bahāism as a political movement which came mainly because of the incompetent rule of the Qajar. The man who was responsible of making the new religion popular in the west countries was 'Abbās Effendi, the eldest son of Bahā 'Allāh.

During the reign of Amīr Kabīr there appeared the danger of Bābism. It was feared that Bābism would attract both the 'ulamā' and the state. For Amīr Kabīr, the execution of the Bāb was essential due to the state reasons.

The relationship between the state and the 'ulamā' opened up a new scene of inimity during the period of Muḥammad Shāh. Fath 'Alī Shāh, even though not successful, had tried to reconcile the religion and the state duties, but Muḥammad Shāh largely ignored this. His belief did not allow even in theory.

the respect of the King to the marja-'i-taqlīd. This led to the hostility of the 'ulamā' in the Qajar reign. In this period the monarch and his ministers did not follow the ways directed by the 'ulamā' and the 'ulamā's influence in intercession waned.

Ann. K.S. Lambton writes :

'In Qajar times as earlier, movement of social revolt tended to take on a religious coloring "because orthodoxy was associated with the ruling institution", and that "because there was no separation between Church and State, unorthodoxy was almost automatically regarded as a threat to the existing régime; and cited Bābism as the chief example. We have already noted, however, the alienation of the ulama from the state' and in the case of Bābism, the danger was initially only to orthodoxy. The state reacted seriously only when its own security was affected. The most significant movements of social revolt in the Qajar period took place precisely within an "orthodox" frame of expression, drawing on a long tradition in so doing.'

In the reign of Amīr Kabīr the coming into existence of Bābīsm and its successor, Bāhā'ism were followed by bloodsheds and strong opposition by the 'ulamā'.

It was generally believed that the doctrine of Bābīsm was entirely opposed to Islam. Their belief in 'the coming of a new revelation would have destroyed the worth of the existing one, which regarded itself as final. The ulama, on the other hand, were the institutional expression of the power of Islam, the expositors and guardians of its doctrine and

1 'Persian Society under the Qajars. 'JRCAS. XLVIII [1961].
136. Cited by Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, p. 141.

the enforcers of its law, and among their function was the rebuttal of heresy and innovation'.¹

Therefore, the 'ulamā' as the custodian of Islam immediately confronted the Bābīs when Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad claimed himself to be the Bāb (gateway) of the Hidden imām in 1254/1848.

THE OPPOSITION OF THE 'ULAMĀ' TO FOREIGN DOMINATION :

The most significant political involvement of the 'ulamā' of this period was in the case of the Russo-Iranian wars. During the initial period of the war, i.e. 1804-13. Efforts were made to obtain fatwas declaring the war against Russia to be jihād (Holy War). Many of the prominent 'ulamā', such as Shaykh Ja'far Kasif al-Ghita and Mullā Ahmad Naraqi, issued fatwas. However this first Russo-Iranian war ended in defeat for Iran and the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813 deprived her of all her caucasian provinces.²

The 'ulamā' continued to agitate for a jihād. Fath 'Alī Shāh was reluctant to the herd of the 'ulamā's call. But the prominent 'ulamā' Aqa Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāī of Karbala (a son of Sayyid 'Alī Ṭabāṭabāī). Mullā Ahmad Naraqi, Mullā Muḥammad Taqi Baraghani of Qazvīn and a number of others who demanded that Fath 'Alī Shāh must declare war on Russia.

1 Hamid Algar, Op.cit., pp. 137-138.

2 Moojan Momin Op.cit., p. 138.

The 'ulama' were in fact threatening to take control of the affairs of government and launch the jiḥād themselves if Fath 'Alī Shāh would not do this. They issued fatwas declaring the jiḥād to be obligatory and opposition to it a sign of unbeliever (kufr).

The outcome of the second Russo-Iranian War turned out to be disastrous for the Iranians. Although the 'ulamā' supported the troops in the battle initially. But after the first reverse they withdrew and one 'ulamā', Mir Fattah, 'betrayed Tabriz into the hand of the Russians'. As the result of the treaty of Turkomanchay (1828) Iran was forced to part with further territory and pay a large indemnity to the Russians.

However, to the Russians, the second Russo - Iranian resulted in the emergence of the 'ulamā' as a force capable of shaping national policy. This was indeed, the first of a chain of episodes where the 'ulamā' had marked influence on the course of Iranian history. 'The subsequent links in this chain were to include agitation against Husayn Khan Sipahsalar in 1873, the opposition to the Tobacco Regie in 1891-2 the involvement of the ulama in constitutional movement 1905-9, and culminating in the Iranian Revolution of 1979'.¹

The proclamation of jiḥād issued by the 'ulamā' caused the Russian oppression to the people in Caucasus in the reign of 'Abbās Mīrzā (1789-1833).

¹ Ibid... p. 138.

Immediately when the troops of Abbās Mīrzā was attacked the people rose against the Russians. The uprising of the people and the attack made by the Iranians was considered by Yermelov the commander-in-chief of the Russian forces as the product of "Religious fanaticism".

The attack became more organised when the 'ulamā' got directly involved in it. In fact the 'ulamā' were acting as de facto chief of the nation.

Algar writes:

'Thus disastrously ended the Second Perso-Russian war. The ulama had been used initially as instruments for the arousing of religious emotions; but their success in arousing these emotions revealed their potential strength as leaders of the nation. The contradiction between the nation and the state rendered them powerless to affect the course of the war; the ever-increasing foreign influence that followed its unfavourable outcome gave a new dimension to their role of leading the nation against the state.'¹

Soon after the end of the second Irano-Russian war there was again a sign that Iran might be drowned in the war. The Russian envoy, A.S. Gribovedov, who got his post as the secretary to the Russian legation in 1820, was killed. The cause of his death was complicated. He had come to Iran, in connection with the treaty of Turkomānchāh and the payment of war reparation for his government.

¹ Hamid Algar, Op. Cit. p.93.

An important consequence of the protest against foreign influence was the fall of the Qajar Dynasty as a result of the protest against the Tobacco Concession. The monopoly of Tobacco enterprise which had been given to a British company, created the opposition of the people against Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. In this movement, one of the religious leaders who played an active role was Mīrzā Hasan Shīrāzī who linked this situation with Islam by proclaiming that the use of Tobacco which was made by the British was a sin.¹ Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghāni, a pan-Islamic leader wrote a letter to the head of the muṭtahids at Samara. In response to this letter the chief muṭtahid gave a fatwa to all believers against the use of Tobacco till the Shāh abolished the concession. The resentment was so strong that mullās and muṭtahids organised demonstrations in Isfahān and Tabrīz against the concession. This was the first time when the public opinion was openly expressed against the Shāh till the latter had to submit to the demands of the 'ulamā'.¹ The influence of the 'ulamā' extended till 1907 and by using this power they could force Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh to stop Reuter Concession² of 1872 and also expel the pro-west minister Mīrzā Husayn Khān.

1 Encyclopaedia of Islam art "Iran".

2 Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh liberalised the economic policy by giving the concession to European power which he thought would accelerate the country's economic situation development. Julius de Reuter the British citizen was enjoyed the right to establish factories and National Bank etc.

Mc Daniel Robert has given the following details :

'By the 1890s Nasir al-Din Shah had been generally successful in his policy of circumscribing the powers of anyone outside the central government. The activities of the clergy were among the elements so circumscribed, and as a result the traditional wedge between the government and clergy had widened. In its early days the dynasty had been legitimized by its recognition of the role of the clergy. At mid-century holy men still played the major role in the administration of justice, and the system still retained its informal character. In the years that followed the first tentative reforms of Amir Kabir, the system began to change, not only in tone but in size. By the 1870s the old, informal Divan Khanah had become the military of Justice and employed nearly fifty people, although it was still part of the Ministry of the Interior. By 1889 it had become even more elaborate and employed in a half-dozen courts (mailis) more than 170 people. Just as significant as these changes was the fact that the people who occupied the position of note within the system were more apt to be Qajar princes than recognized holy men. Thus, to the extent that Nasir al-Din Shah attempted to create a systematic structure along lines borrowed from the west, did the latter's existence alter the relations of the government with the clergy.

As noted above, however, members of the clergy were not removed from the positions of influence which they had traditionally held in the social structure, and it was this very inconsistency which brought the government trouble. By 1890, when economic pressure on other elements in Persian society culminated in open hostility to the government, the clergy was in excellent position to lead it. Persian society, particularly the urban and commercial segments, had traditionally been organized into a maze of guilds and fellowship,¹ and most of these had a more or less religious character'.

When in 1896 Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh was killed by the bullet fired by Mīrzā Ridā Kirmānī put an end to the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, Iran

1 Robert A. Mc Daniel, The Shuster Mission and the Persian Constitutional Revolution. (Minneapolis Bibliotheca Islamica 1974). pp. 27-28.

was in a side of great crisis. The repeal of the tobacco concession in 1890 was not fully exploited by the 'ulamā'. It gave birth to their predominant role in the political life of Iran. As H. Algar writes :

'The ascendancy gained by the ulama through the repeal of the tobacco concession was not immediately exploited by them for any serious attempt at weakening the Qajar dynasty. Indeed there appeared to be even cooperation between ulama and state. This cooperation had, however, no firm basis, and when Russian economic influence came to threaten the independence of Iran, the example of the agitation against the tobacco concession was not forgotten. Appeals in religious terms, expressed by religious leaders brought about the movement against the Qajar monarchy known as the Constitutional Revolution. The events of January, 1892, foreshadowed this mass agitation. On Dhū-l-Hijja 25, 1313/ June 8, 1896, Muzaffar ud-Dīn Shāh entered his capital, and soon after, with the expenses of his coronation defrayed by a loan from the Imperial Bank, was able to mount the throne. This financial weakness, the result of the extravagance of Nāsir ud-Dīn Shāh and the mismanagement of Amīn us-Sultān was to prove the chief source of unrest in the reign of Muzaffar ud-Dīn Shāh. For impecuniosity, Together with continuing extravagance, led to the necessity of foreign loans, and these in turn to the entrenchment of Russian economic influence. Resentment felt at the growth of this influence brought together again the ulama and the merchants in opposition to the government. The movement that was to develop into the Constitutional Revolution had its origin in the traditional dual role of the ulama-resistance to foreign encroachment and to the power of the state. Events, now to be discussed, caused this role to be fulfilled with a greater determination and seriousness, ultimately leading to an unprecedented clash, between the power of the ulama and that of the state'.

In 1317/1400 Amīn us-Sultān entered into an agreement with Russia for a loan of $2\frac{1}{2}$ million rubles with 5% interest to be paid back

1 Hamid Algarh. Op. Cit. pp. 221-222.

within the period of seventy five years. In this agreement there was a condition that Iran should not take loan from other countries unless the amount was repaid. Now Iran was almost under the complete dominance of foreign financial influence. The 'ulama' and traders became very hostile when they knew the wasteful expenditure of the Shāh in his trip to Europe. At the time of second ministry of Amīn us-Sultān, the Pan-Islamic opposition was greatly successful especially during 1900 to 1903.

Having granted the loan to the regime, Russia received the right of monopoly of fisheries in Gīlān. The leader of the Mujtahid, Hāji Muḥammad Rafi Shari in Gīlān soon reacted. He came to Tehran to participate in the opposition with the 'ulama' of Tehran against it. At the same time the 'ulama' of Tabriz protested against the grant of concession to a Russian company for the construction of a road from the border of Julfa to Tabriz.

About the attitude of the 'ulama' against the loan Nikki Keddie writes :

'The unity of the higher Tehran ulama against the loan, inspite of the money and presents offered them by the government was far greater than Hardinge had imagined. Every one of them except the Imam Jom'eh who was a royal appointee and related to the Shah by marriage, boycotted a farewell reception held especially for them by the Shah before his trip abroad. One member of the ulama in declaiming against the sale of the country to Russia declared that the Shah would not be permitted to reenter

1 Hamid Algarh, Op. Cit., p. 226.

the country unless he signed a pledge to make no further Russian loans and grant no more concessions to that nation. He added that the people had forced as strong a ruler as Nāser ed -Din to dismiss a chief minister under similar circumstances and that they would be equally firm with his successor. When the Ain ed-Dauleh and Sipah Sālār (Commander-in-Chief) sent a message to the leading ulama informing them that they were entrusted with the government during the Shah's absence, and warning them to be careful, the recipients sent a scornful reply. 'where camels are sold for a penny, 'they said there is no price at all for a donkey' this was an intimation that the mullās thought little of the Shah and his Prime Minister and nothing whatever of the lower minister appointed to act on their behalf.¹

The strong opposition of the 'ulamā' against the loan did not remain confine to Tehran, but it spread to many other cities including the sacred cities of Iraq. The 'ulamā' of Najaf and Karbala responded to the call of the 'ulamā' of Tehran and sent a protest to the Shāh before his departure against the conclusion of the Russian loan.

Although the 'ulamā' were not successful in stopping the Russian loan, but their opposition against Amīn us-Sultān and his policies during the Shāh's absence was strong. In Tehran there were Āqa Sayyid 'Alī Akbar Tafrashi, Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāi, Mirza Abu-l-Qasim Ṭabāṭabāi who together tried to topple Amīn us-Sultān. The first heavy attack did not appear in Tehran but it erupted in the provinces.

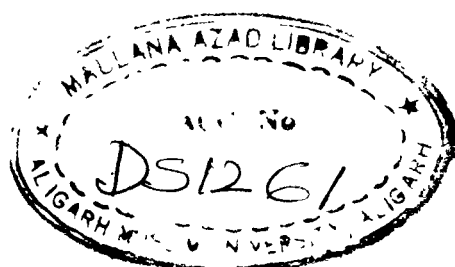
In June, 1902 the muftahids of Najaf demanded the Iranian government to explain how the loan from Russia was spent. They also demanded that the sale of wine be banned and the prosecution of the Bābīs be stopped. These incidents, to mention only a few, showed the

¹ Nikki Keddie 'Iranian Politics 1900-1905 : Background to Revolution I. ME Studies V 5 (1969), p.26.

success of the 'ulamā' in mobilising oppositions against the government.

According to Nikki R. Keddie the powers of the 'ulamā' became strong because of the following factors : (1) Twelver Shi'i theory which considered all temporal rulers illegitimate and came increasingly to assert that legitimate guidance, pending the return of the 'hidden' twelfth Imām is to be found in the Shi'i religious leaders the mojtaheds : (2) The independent and untouchable position of the main Shi'i leadership at the shrine cities of Ottoman Iraq, beyond the reach of the Iranian government: (3) the great veneration for the ulama leaders by most Iranians, along with very close ties between the guilds and the ulama. (4) identification of the ulama with the popular anti-foreign cause ever since the first wars against Russia in the early nineteenth century and (5) the material wealth of the ulama (as direct receivers of the khums tax they less independent on the government for wealth than in Sunni countries). and their control over the law courts and education, which remained less disputed in nineteenth century's Iran than in most other Muslim countries."¹

¹ Nikki Keddie 'The Iranian Structure and Social Change 1800-1969' : An overview. Int J : Middle East Stud 2 (1971), p. 1.



CHAPTER - IV

THE REVOLUTION OF 1906

The Constitutional Revolution of 1905-09 was the most important event in the history of modern Iran. It involved all the segments of Iranian society the intellectuals enlightened members of bureaucracy, religious leaders, merchants and the urban population who each to a greater or lesser extent, participated in this reform movement. As one writer points out the Revolution 'ended the traditional system of government in which the Shah, as the shadow of God on Earth ruled his people without any legal and institutional system of government in which "the people" were sovereign, and their elected representative made and unmade ministers, laws budgets concessions and foreign treaties. In this revolution the political crown played a prominent role. An organized procession in April 1905 raised the issue whether the Shah could freely choose his administrators. A larger assembly, nine months later, initiated

the demand to limit the monarch's arbitrary powers by creating a "House of Justice". Spontaneous riots in June 1906, and the killing of demonstrators, poured a stream of blood into the wide gap between the government (dawlat) and the nation (millat)¹.

After the assassination of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in 1909, his son Muhammad Rīzā Kirmāni a follower of Jamāl al-Dīn Afghānī's son Muzaffar al Dīn-Shāh who was unhealthy and ailing, ascended the throne. Muzaffar al Dīn Shāh, who ruled for a short period was very much different from his father and predecessors. It is said that when Crown Prince still in Tabriz, he was under the influence of the Shakhis. But later on when he ascended the throne he had given up the heterodox Shakhis beliefs. 'The principal event of his reign was the build-up of increasing pressure for a constitutional government. The ulama became leading voices in this movement'³.

Amīn us-Sultān, the unpopular Prime Minister in the reign of Nāṣir al Dīn-Shāh, was dismissed by Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh and Amīn al-Dawla was appointed Prime Minister in 1907. He served as Prime Minister for 14 months. He obtained the Shāh's approval for a council of high officials

¹ Abrahamian, Ervand. 'The Crowd in the Persian Revolution', Iranian Studies, 4.(1969), p.1.

² E.G. Browne, Persian Revolution 1905-1909 (Cambridge 1966), p.98.

³ Mojib Momen, An Introduction to Shi'i Islam (Yale University Press.1985), p.139.

(a'yān-i dawlatī) to introduce reforms in the country. He engaged Belgium experts to replace tax-formers in the custom administration and sought¹ foreign loan.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Iranian government took a big loan from Russia.

Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh's health was not good. Perhaps he was suffering from hypochondriac. His Physician advised him to go to Europe to try the effects of mineral water. For the trip, money was needed and efforts were made to get a loan of 1,000,000 pound sterling in London. But since the plan could not be fulfilled, it resulted in the dismissal of Amīn al-Dawla and Amīn us-Sultān replaced of Amīn al-Dawla.

The agreement on loan from Russia had been completed on January, 1900. It is said that in order to avoid the British and Iranian opposition the Shāh took the loan secretly as he was afraid of both British and Iranian opposition. This made the government of Iran an instrument in the hands of Russia. The loan was used profusely by the Shāh and his courtiers who were on the European trip. Before the proclamation of the loan, Nizām us-Sultāna, the governor of Āzarbāyjan in 1899, offered that if the British could stop the loan from Russia for six months, then he himself would try to evoke the people from north as well as from south through the religious means to stop the acceptance of the loan from Russia.

¹ F.R.C. Bagley in 'New Light on the Iranian Constitutional Movement' Cajar Iran edited by Edmund Bosworth and Corole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh University Press, 1983), p.49.

The people of Iran felt that the Shāh had sold their country to the foreigners. This led the growth of anti government feelings which appeared in the form of secret societies.

In the words of Nikki R. Keddie :

'The latter both carried out educational and publicist activity and in some cases made specific political plans to change the organization or personnel of the government. In addition to the sporadic rioting over immediate issues that had characterized the period since 1892, there now developed more nationally co-ordinated and planned oppositional activities, which culminated in at least a limited success when the Amin os-Sultān was forced by the opposition to resign as Prime Minister. in 1903. These first years of the twentieth century also saw continual appeals from all sections of the opposition to the British for help, to which the British responded for the first time, though in a limited manner, concentrating their aid on the most conservatives section of the oppositions, the leading ulama, and rebuffing appeals from the more secular reformers and revolutionaries.'

She further says, 'In this period, as at the time of the fall of the Amin od-Dauleh after his brief premiership of 1897-98, the British took a somewhat shortsighted and narrowly commercial view of the loan issue. Although the foreign office finally agreed to drop a demand for British customs controllers in the South, no care was taken to ensure that the new British offer reached the ears of the Shah, and it appears that the Amin os-Sultān was able to delude the Shah into thinking that the British had made no such offer and that money was obtainable only from Russia.'¹

The announcement of the loan created dissatisfaction among mullās. people and officials as well. The officials were not satisfied with

¹ Nikki R. Keddie 'Iranian Politics 1900-1905 : Background to Revolution I', ME Studies, (1969), p.4

Amīn us-Sultān as they considered him to be the deceiver of the Shāh for he did not inform the Shāh about the offering of the loan from the British. 'From 1894 to 1900, British policy generally remained favourable to the Amin os-Sultān and always hostile towards the ulama - led opposition, even though the former led Iran into increasing subservience to the Russians, while the latter were now inclined to co-operate with the British'.¹ At last in April the Shāh and his retinue left for Europe. At Paris on 2nd August an anarchist attempted on the Shāh's life but was not successful. At the time of the abortive attempt on Muẓaffar al-Dīn's life in Paris, Amīn-us Sultān, who accompanied the Shāh, could tackle the situation with self-possession. He was thus favoured by the Shāh and received the title Atā'bak-i'Azam.

The situation in Iran itself was not good. there were reports of serious struggle between the mullās and the Minister of Police. At the same time the price of bread raised up again. In Isfahan there started a new agitation against Christian missionaries while in Hamadan a clash between the mullās and Babīs took place. There was discontent in military because they received less money, and most of the money was taken by high officers and functionaries. Riots broke out mainly due to acute shortage of grain. Since Amīn us-Sultān had not disclosed the offer of British to the Shāh, his position with the Shāh became doubtful. The negative

¹ Ibid., p.5.

feeling of the people against Amīnus Sultān was also growing. The mullā of Shīrāz and Isfahān demanded the dismissal of Amīnus Sultān.

In the year 1902. the rumour of the second loan from Russia had been heard in London in March. The amount of the loan was 10.000 rouble with 4% interest. By giving this loan Russia had been granted to build a new road from Julfa to Tehran via Tabriz and Qazwin. The loan was actually¹ paid in April, 1902. After getting the money, Muzaffar al-Din again went to Europe and reached England on August 17, 1902. On December 30, 1902 a telegram from Petersberg was published in the Times showing that the Persian government agreed to introduce financial reforms under the advise of Belgian² officials and thirty of them had already been in Persia.

1 E.G. Browne. Op.cit., p. 104.

2 Before he was dismissed Amīn al-Dawla took some of the Belgians to Iran Naus was among them. Naus assumed the post of Director-General of Custom and looked after the sadr-i a'zam. Later on he was designated Minister of Customs and he fully exercised his power. When Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh left Europe for the first time there appeared protest against Naus and Amīn us-Sultān and in these protests the 'ulamā' and the merchants were in close co-operation. The new Custom Tariffs were considered to be dangerous to the interests of the merchants and there was the criticism that the Belgian favoured the Armanian and non-Muslim merchants. It was natural for the 'ulamā' to oppose the non-Muslim Ministry. Both the 'ulamā' and the merchants were afraid of the foreign domination, therefore they fought together. (See Ann K.S. Lambton: Persia the Breakdown of Society in The Cambridge History of Islam, vol. I (Cambridge, 1970). p. 466.

In the summer of 1901 there was a combined effort to overthrow Amīn us-Sultān and to reverse his pro-Russian policy. In January 1903 the Shāh, who was afraid of revolution under Aynud-Dawla who was regarded to be under British influence, removed him from the post of governor of¹ Tehran and appointed him as the governor of Arabistān. Right from the time of the first Russian loan, there appeared in Persian newspapers published outside Iran such as Hablu'l Matīn of Calcutta and Thurayya of Cairo, the articles which attacked the Atābak. Meanwhile, the secret societies started anti-Atābak movement. Among these societies there appeared at least one of them which included Azalī Bābī members who publicised the bad consequence of Russian loan by sending the article outside the country and to Foreign Ministers of European countries. Two of the leading men of these societies were a liberal preacher Malik al-Mutakallimīn and Mirza Yahyā Dawlātābadi, a leader of Westernised school. These societies worked with other opposition groups and the court to bring about the downfall of the Atābak.

The so-called Shabnamehs (The Night Papers) which had a wide circulation seriously attacked Atābak and his policy. It was distributed through the post offices and foreign legations. One of the distributors at court

1 E.G. Browne, Op.cit., p. 105.

while putting a Shahnameh on the Shah's desk, was seen by the Shāh. He was caught and tortured and at last he had to disclose the place where the sheets were printed and the name of the people involved. A number of people were arrested. Upto early September 1901 fourty were arrested. The opposition from the side of the 'ulamā' was not confined to Tehran but it appeared also in the holy shrines of Iraq where the 'ulamā' of Najaf and Karbalā responded to the call of the Tehran 'ulamā'. It appeared that the 'ulamā' of Iraq protested against the Russian loan by sending a protest letter to the Shāh before the Shāh left the country. The aim of the Iraqi 'ulamā' was the same as that of the Iranian 'ulamā'.

Hardinge, the British Minister in Persia, travelled to Isfahān in April and had a talk with a wealthy mullā Shāh al-Aragian who pointed out that almost all the 'ulamā' had the same idea that nothing could be done in the absence of the Shāh in opposing the Russian influence but there was a proposal that all leading 'ulamā' of Iran should request the Ottoman Sultan to ask the Shāh of Iran not to give further concession to Russia, and if the Shāh ignored this demand the 'ulamā' would not be responsible for the outcome.

During the year 1900-02 the opposition could not stop the Shāh from travelling to Europe or stop the Russian loan and the giving of concession to the Russians. At the same time there was a contact between the modernist and even the revolutionary secret societies and the high ranking 'ulamā' with a particular aim to weaken the Russian influence and to change the Prime

Minister. The opposition to the new custom regulations and the Belgian control being a part of general discontent about the increasing foreign intervention started in various Iranian cities. Though many were arrested and exiled in the Summer of 1901, the government could not stop the oppositional activities which later on led to the down fall of Atābak in the autumn of 1903.

The period of 1900-02 saw a change in British policy which for the first time brought the British in contact with the leading 'ulamā' who formed a section of the opposition group. The same period saw Iran facing the economic crisis. The national debt increased immensely without inadequate financial reform to increase the income of the government in order to pay off the debt. M. Naus, the Belgian chief of custom administration and his assistants were considered as the instruments of Russian influence. There were many who protested against the new customs as a form of foreign domination. The Iranians felt that the strict and frequently raised up taxes were useless since they were to be paid off for the debt created by the extravagant Shāh.¹

In Tehran and Yazd, the opposition to the new Tariff grew and led to serious riots. In Yazd it led to the terrible massacre of the Bābīs. The 'ulamā' were among those who were against the new Tariff. The Chief Mujtahid of Tabriz who incited the people to oppose the new Tariff was² arrested and punished.

1 Nikki R. Keddie, Op.cit., p.28.

2 E.G. Browne, Op.cit., p.106.

The opposition to various acts, such as to foreign loans to the custom reforms to the excessiveness of the court to the un-Islamic act like the drinking of wine grew stronger in Iran. Many times it led to violent action such as attacking the non-Muslim ministers and the Bābīs.¹

The formidable massacre of the Bābīs in the year 1903 took place in Isfahān when a Bābī money changer was ordered to be beaten by Āqā Najafī on the charge of infidelity. Six hundred Bābīs took refuge at the British consulate. Then the consulate was encircled by many thousand Muslims who wanted the Bābīs to surrender. Āqā Najafī, who was persuaded by the Zillū's-Sultān, later on agreed to disperse the crowd. The Bābīs at last left the consulate with the promise that no harm would be done to them but on the following day two Bābī merchants were beaten by the crowd led by a mullā and their bodies were burned in a public square. Many protest came from outside the country. The government of Iran had to assure them that Āqā Najafī would not be allowed to harm them again. But in the meantime the agitation extended widely, resulting in the death of a large number of victims.

¹ ME. Yapp, 'The Last Year of the Qajar Dynasty' Twentieth Century Iran, edited by Hossein Amirsadighi (London 1977). p. 5.

In a talk with Hardinge, British Minister in Iran, in June 9. Atābak stressed that the anti-Bābī action and the riots which took place in Tabriz including the custom riots were part of the same movement which came from the 'ulama' of the shrine cities. Najaf and Karbala, who opposed¹ the Shāh on the reason of sailing Iran to the infidel Russia.

The presecution of the Bābīs at Yazd and Isfahān and the displaying of dissatisfaction could be again seen in August and September of 1903. According to the report of the Times (August 8) it appeared that there were certain influential mullās who had raised the question of the lawful position of Turkey as the caliph. It was said that this idea of the mullāh might have been inspired by the Pan-Islamic doctrines of Afghāni in order to unite the Sunnis and Shiites.

The growing discontent extended to terribly on September 15 1903 that Amīn us-Sultān resigned from the post of Prime Minister and Avnūd-Dawla was made Prime Minister. He was appointed because he was thought² to be a strong man capable of facing acceptance of Nau's proposals. In the Persian New Year (March 21/1905), the Shāh announced his intention to

¹ Nikki Keddie, 'Iranian Politics: Background to Revolution II' ME Studies, V5 (1969) p.157.

² F.R.C. Bagley, Op.cit. p. 49.

perform the pilgrimage to Mashad. In the absence of the Shāh, the Crown prince, Muhammad 'Alī, was on the throne. The Russian commissioner for frontier relation with Persia, M. Kochanovski, met him at Astārā and the Shāh travelled to Russia along with him. The Tehranians got angry with the Shāh. M. Heynseen, the new Belgian Director reached Bushire in early spring, 1905 and started to charge the high tariff. The Persian merchants reacted against this order by refusing to clear their goods and asked the Shāh to take action in the direction to stop the clearance of custom duty till the new rules were removed.

The cause of discontent against the Shāh was partly due to the huge money he spent on travelling in Europe and to the new rules of customs. Other reasons of dissatisfaction with the Shāh were his allowance of the foreigners to exploit Iran by various concessions due to his carelessness and the oppressive rule of Avnu'd-Dawla. The discontent was enhanced by the misbehaviour of the oppressing Belgian Minister, M. Naus and Āsafu'd-Dawla who treated the people cruelly. At Mashhad Āsafu'd-Dawla ordered the soldiers to fire on a mob who came to protest. At Kirmān a principal mujtahid was exiled from that city by Zafaru's-Sultana and a mulla at Qavīn was treated in the same way by Wazīr-i Akram. In Tehran seven or eight merchants were bastinadoed by the governor charged of raising the price of sugar.

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The merchants took bast in the masjid-i-Shāh and soon after the chief mullās and the prominent leader, Sayyid Tabātabā'ī including the chief promoters of Revolution, Āga Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Al-Afghani and Shavkh Fazlullāh, one of the three founders of the constitutional movement 2 also joined them. Besides the desire for justice and the demand to get rid of Aynu'd-Dawla, the agitation also centered at the dismissal of certain ministers and the removal of the Custom Minister, Joseph Naus 3 and the Tehran governor who ordered the punishment to the merchants.

The talk of the Constitution and the National Assembly had yet not appeared at this time. What the people wanted at that time was the dismissal of Aynu'd-Dawla. It was interesting to note that a large number of prominent persons who were not interested in reform and the anti constitutional government also wanted to dismiss Aynu'd-Dawla. They gave full support to the refugees in bast. 'Alī Mīrza, the then Crown Prince, was one among others. He and Amīn us-Sultān alongwith one of his friends gave 30,000 tuman supporting the maintenance of bastis.

1 The sanctuary from secular authority provided by mosques, residence of 'ulamā', and other places.

2 The other two were Sayyid Muḥammad Tabātabā'ī and Sayyid Abdu'llāh Bibihani.

3 Moreover, the 'ulamā', merchants, and modernists came together in opposition to Naus when he dressed himself as a mullā in the custom hall and his photograph was taken by Sayyid Abdu'llāh Bibihani. A large number of 'ulamā' planned together to remove Naus. Small cards attached with Naus's photograph were distributed with the sentence "Muslim Islam is dead and infidelity is up. The sovereign is Naus, the Vizier is Lavers (another Belgian and the Stateman Christian) it is end."

'Amu ud-Dawla sent his soldiers to stop the agitation. The road leading to the bastis were blocked by his troops. At that time not only the mullas and theological students but also the merchants participated.

The Shāh unsuccessfully threatened and induced the refugees to go back to the city. Amir Bahadur Jang who came with 300 housemen also failed to bring those people back to the city. When the situation became worse the Shah sent them a dast-khatt, or autograph letter, promising to dismiss 'Amu ud-Dawla; to convene the 'Adalat-Khana, or or "House of Justice" which they now demanded, and which was to consist of representative elected by the clergy, merchants, landed proprietors, and presided over by the Shah himself; to abolish favouritism; and to make all Persian subjects equal in the eyes of the law. This dast-khatt was photographed, and copies of it were circulated throughout the country, and the refugees then returned to the city with great pomp and circumstance and were received by the Shah, who verbally renewed¹ the promises which he had already made in writing.'

In April, 1906 the mullās of Tehran submitted a petition to the Shah referring to the turmoil of December 1905 and ask the Shāh to put his promise of reform into practice. This petition was of no avail at all when the situation became terrible. The streets were full of the

1 E.G. Browne. Op. cit., p. 114.

Cossacks and soldiers. The spies were at work in all the places. People could come to the streets only three hours after sun-set. 'Amr ud-Dawla continued to be opposed by Sayyid Muhammad and Sayyid Abdu'lla. From the pulpit, particularly in the month of Muharram (Feb 25-March 26, 1906), Aga Sayyid Jamal and Shaikh Muhammad the preachers started to condemn the tyrannical rule.

E.G. Browne writes :

'Other influence were also at work, notably a secret society known as the Anjuman-i-Makhfi, and a National Library, or Kitab-Khana-i-Milli. The latter was essentially a free library designed to educate the people in patriotic ideas, and was founded amongst other by Hajji Sayyid Nasru'llah Akhawi, an upright man and true patriot, who is now Vice-President of the Majlis.'¹

Severe conflicts between the soldiers and the people took place.

The dead body of Sayyid was taken by the people to the markets and streets which roused sympathy among the people when they saw this procession.

The soldiers wanted to halt this procession by firing into the mobs which which resulted in the death of 15 persons. In the end, the situation was in the hands of the soldiers when they quelled the opposition and controlled the towns. Many mullās, rawza-khwans (Professional reciters of narrative verses and prose about the suffering and martyrdom of the imām) and people of various occupations took refuge in Masjid-i-Jami. The body

¹ E.G. Browne, Op. cit., p. 116

of the slain Sawid was buried in the same place. After being captured by the soldiers for few days, the captive asked permission from the Shah to leave for Qum. This event which took place in 21 July was known as Hira-i-Kubra (The Great Exodus).¹ Various groups of people, comprising of 'ulamā',² merchants, artisans, together took to sanctuary at Qum.

In this period the market was forced to be opened by 'Amir-Dawla on July 12. A certain agent of merchants and Bankers asked Grant Duff the British Charge d' affairs at Culhak that whether they would be allowed or will be dispersed if they took bast at the British legation. Mr Grant Duff expressed the hope that they would not have recourse to such an expedient, but he said it was not his power. In view of the acknowledged custom in Persia and the immorial right of bast to use force to expel them if they came'.³ The bastis used to come to foreign legation because it was the place which was exempted from punishment of the government. In the words of Robert A. Mc. Daneal :

"The arrests which had followed the renewal of agitation in early July, 1906, had led the clergy to seek some means of defense against the use of force by the government. The only force which was available to them was one which conveniently combined the appearance of Persian custom with

1 Ibid., p. 113

2 Ann. K. S. Lamton, 'Persia : Breakdown of the Society' Cambridge History of Islam vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1970), p.466.

3 Abrahamain, Ervand Op.Cit., p.133

the more substantial force of military might. As the strength of Persian customs gradually disintegrated, the right of bast, or sanctuary had come to mean less and less and the traditional places of bast had become less sacrosanct. If the cause were sufficiently important, the bast could be violated and the basti dragged, kicking and squirming, from his refuge, as Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani had been dragged from the Shrine of Shah 'Abd al-'Azim fifteen years before. The only place in Iran which the government could not violate with impunity were the foreign legations. These had been used as early as 1843 when a number of people took refuge in the Russian and British legations to escape the vengeance of Hajji Mirza Agasi, while only a short time before the crisis of the summer of 1906,¹ the Shaikh al-Ra'is, a pan Islamist and follower of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, had sought bast in the Turkish embassy.¹ The number of refugees rose to 958 on July 23 1906 and increased to 5,000 on the next three days.² The participants were comprised of merchants and craft guilds.

The demonstrators demanded the declaration of a code of law.

Quite irritated and puzzled, at last the Shāh agreed to the demands of the people and on July 30, the liberal Mirza Nasrullah Khan took the place of 'Avn' ud-Dawla and welcomed 'ulamā' from Qum to Tehran. The agreement of the Shāh had no effect as the people did not believe in him any more and they demanded for the grant of constitution and formation of a representative assembly.

Although the Prime Minister had resigned on 29 July it was too late to prevent the agitation upto August 1, the number of the people taking shelter to the sanctuary exceeded 13 000 and two or three days

¹ Robert A. Mc Daniel. The Shuster Mission and the Persian Constitutional Revolution (Menneapolis, Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974), pp. 59-60.

² Ann K.S. Lambton, Op. Cit., p. 466

later the number reached 16.000. At last all the demands were fulfilled by the Shah. The constitution was granted on August 5, 1906. The people now left for their homes. The old regime of Iran which was ruled by absolutism for a long period was now modified by constitutional forms.¹

1 Ibid. p.466.

CHAPTER - V

ATTITUDE OF THE 'ULAMĀ' TOWARDS THE MASHRŪṬĀ

In 1906 the meaning of the constitution and legislative body was still not clear to the 'ulamā'. They aimed at the ending of the mis-government and a return to the Shari'a. As K.S. Lambton writes, their 'general aim was simply the establishment of rule of justice (adālat),¹ in the tradition of medieval Islam'. However, they had not realised fully that by the establishment of the constitution their traditional role in society would decline. But their role had for a long time been² eroded due to various measures taken by the central government.

As a matter of fact only few important supporters of the constitutional government knew what constitutional government was, but all of them thought that constitutional government was the solution of the crisis

1 Encyclopaedia of Islam, art. "Dustur"

2 Robert A Mc Daniel, Op.cit., p. 57.

through which Iran was passing. As one author has pointed out :

A prominent religious leader issued a public statement stating that the constitutional government conformed with the teachings of Islam. This statement was overwhelmingly supported by the people who know little about the constitutional system of government. After the serious clash between the governor of Tehran and the people led by religious leaders, Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh was ultimately forced to accept the demand of the constitutionalists in August 1906.

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Malkam Khān, (d. 1936) a liberal reformer, agreed that it was only the 'ulamā' who could arouse the Iranian masses and bring about the change. It was still a question that in this movement, the 'ulamā' served consciously or unconsciously as the instrument of the liberal reformers who held ideas quite different from the 'ulamā'.

Regarding the term mashrūta (constitutional government) Hamid Algar writes :

"Precise ideas concerning the meaning of the word mashrūta (constitutional government) seem to have been held by very few, and this confusion was in large measure common to the ulama and secret societies. Indeed, it was precisely this confusion that

1 MIRZA MALKAM KHAN was born in Julfa, Isfahan, in 1242/1833-4. He was converted to Islam and became a translator to the Russian legation. He first studied at Armenian school and then at the Polytechnique, where he became acquainted with the writings of the 18th century French Political theorist and also the work of Auguste Comte.

made their cooperation possible. In another sense, too, it may have been deliberate. We have seen that first the demand was for a "house of justice", later defined as a place "where the complaints of the people should receive attention," and the word "majlis" did not occur until later in the speeches of the ulama. Possibly there was then a deliberate progression toward the demand for constitutional government. If for some the apparent confusion was the result of a stratagem, it appears in general to have been real enough". Question were often asked about the relation between the reforms demanded and Islamic law. Often the answer was provided by an identification of the two : "Mashrūfiyat and Mashrūṭiyyat are the same : government according to the law of Islam; justice and equality, or according to science and civilization this equation had already been suggested by Malkum Khan, and it was possibly intended as a means of enlisting the support of those of orthodox religious outlook for the constitutional movement. Similar idea was put forward by Zayn ul-'Abidin Maraghai in his Sivāhatnāma-ʿi Ibrāhim Big and Hājji Abul-I Hasan Mīrza Shaykh ur Ta'is in his Ittiḥād-i-Islām. Whether or not such an equation appears accurate to latter-day observers is a question of little importance; it might be remarked in passing that many in Iran, as elsewhere in the Islamic world, noted the vigor of Western life and, comparing it with the unfolding of human energy brought about by Islam, tended to assume an identical source for the two phenomena. It is enough to note the currency of such ideas as a probable factor determining the support given to the constitutional movement by the ulama. Furthermore it appeared initially that the purpose of the 'adālatkhāna was to secure the application of Islamic law. The duality of shar' and 'urf had left much of that law in abeyance, and it is possible the ulama saw in the situation a means of applying the shari'at in its entirety."¹

We cannot estimate the real beliefs of the 'ulama' who participated in the secret societies but anyhow we can suggest that they were different from the religious class on the questions of reform and modernisation. By

¹ Hamid Algar, Op. cit., pp. 252 - 254.

using traditional form of expression in which they were expert, they could successfully create the unity of purpose.

The conflict between the Shari'a and the constitution had become manifest as early as 1907 and it was generally accepted by both the groups of the 'ulamā' - supporters and opponents of the constitution. While Shawkh Fadlullah Nuri and his disciples suggested that constitutionalism did not conform with Islam, many 'ulamā' pointed out that the constitutional government was not only harmless to religious but in fact it was enjoined by Islam. This view became dominant among the Iranian 'ulamā'.

It has been pointed out that 'the demand for granting the constitution was mainly led by the ulama. 'They might legitimately have expected from its realization a systematic application of Islamic law and hence an expansion or at least perpetuation of their function, but little if any thought was in fact given to their role in a constitutional system of government. While the secret societies in part consisted of ulama and were based in part on Islamic ideology, they contained also men opposed to clerical influence, who did not intend to apply the common Shari'at. Contradiction concealed by the confusion of thought and the common struggle against
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'Aym ud-Daula began later to become apparent.'

Although the attitude of the 'ulamā' towards the constitution was still

1 Ibid., p.255.

not clear, yet it cannot be denied that they played an important role for the achievement of the constitution. During this period the Iranian rulers had become subservient to foreign powers. Since the establishment of the Qajar dynasty (1717 -1925) upto the present day, the 'ulama' had been opposing the central government. One of them was Muhammad Husayn Nā'inī who played an important role in the constitutional revolution.

Muhammad Husayn Nā'inī :

Muhammad Husayn Nā'inī was born in a religious family of Nā'in in (C. 1850). He was one of the pupils of a distinguished religious leader, Hajji Mirzā Hasan Shirāzī, who gave religious decree against the use of Tobacco in 1891. Nā'inī became a leading scholar of Islamic sciences and was considered one of the most learned Shi'ite ¹ mujtahids. Nā'inī got his early education in Nā'in . In the year 1877 when he was seventeen years old, he moved to Isfahan for religious studies. He stayed with the important mujtahid Shaykh Muhammad Baqir Isfahānī (d.1883) in the city of Isfahan. While staying in Isfahan, he saw a lot of oppressive actions committed in that city by the mujtahids. This situation urged him to revolt against the absolutism both of the 'ulama' and the government. Thus Nā'inī who was brought up in the family of a Shaykh al-Islam denied his own class

1 Fareshte M, Nourai, 'The Constitutional Ideas of A Shi'ite Mujtahid : Muhammad Husayn Na'ini Iranian Studies vol.8, 1975, p.236.

and grouped himself with the 'ulamā' who were the leaders of the Shi'ites and were supported by the merchants of Iran. He enjoyed his reputation till the end of his life when he died in 1936.

Na'īnī and the idea about the constitution :

Na'īnī's important Persian treatise Tanbīh al-Ummah va Tanzih al-Millat ('The Enlightening of the Muslim community and its purification') including a muqaddimah (Preface), five chapters and a Khātimah (Appendix) was published for the first time in Baghdad in 1328 (1909) and again in Tehran in 1374 (1955). This treatise threw light on the socio-political attitudes of the religious class in Iran during the period.

His main concern was in regard to the nature of kingship. He opposed absolutism and defended the idea of constitution from the point of view of the Shari'a. Though he based his attitude on traditional theory, he was also influenced by the secular idea of the West. His argument was based on the Hadith and Sunna of the Prophet and the traditions of the imāms. He also had ideas about European Constitutional theory and was interested in the recent happenings in his neighbouring countries which aimed at the domination of Muslims countries. Thus he also talked of the need to resist the aggression of the Western countries.

Na'īnī believed that any society which wanted to survive must depend on some kind of government, whether it was established by one person

or by any assembly, by right or by force, by inheritance or election. He held that the state had two functions to perform. One function was to educate the community of the believers preserve the right of the individuals ummah. Another function was to protect the vatan (fatherland) against its enemies. Na'ini combines Islamic and secular concepts and uses the forms ummah and vatan interchangeably 'although there is no concept of territorial state in the modern sense in the Islamic theory of government. Islam is a community the bounds of which are set by belief and not by territorial borders. His references to such terms provide a new interpretation relating Islamic theory to Western political theory'. He distinguishes two kinds of authority: One is which he terms as tamlukī-rah and istibdādīyah (despotic and tyrannical), where the king considers the mulk (Kingdom) as his private property and the people as his "Chattels". 'Such a ruler squanders the country's revenues for his own personal use: raises his favorites position of power and wealth, confiscates the property of those whom he dislikes, and doles out justice as he sees fit. He seeks no other aim with respect to the people, but to satisfy his own private whims and pleasures. Finally, he claims to possess a divine nature and considers himself "an incarnate manifestation of God".¹

In Na'ini's view this kind of arbitrary rule is illegitimate and

1 Ibid., pp. 238 - 239.

doomed to destruction. 'He considers the Ummavids, who were the first dynasty to establish a Mulk (Kingdom), responsible for transforming the ideal state of the Shari'at into a power state to fulfil their own personal interests. In the early centuries of Islam, he argues, the community was ruled with justice, reason, and fairness in accord with the Quran and traditions and the Muslim displayed great courage and bravery in extending the realm of Islam to farflung places. With the establishment of the Ummavid dynasty the rulers began to neglect the condition required for just rule, and did not concern themselves with the problem of government and the administration of the community. This process of change ultimately lessened the authority of Islam and weakened the rule of law, leading to the deterioration of the Muslim community and the object state of Muslim in general. By implication Nai'ini likens this general state of decline to the conditions of Iran : "Arbitrary rule, misuse of power, injustice and extortion by the government and its officials, has turned this country into one of the poorest and most wretched on earth."¹

However, Na'ini expresses his approval to the second type of rule for which he uses the terms vilayativah (trusteeship), mahdudah (limited), mas'ulah (responsible), and shawravivah (consultation). 'Its power is

1 Ibid., p.239.

based on the trust of the governed and its aim is to serve the interests of the public. In this form of limited government, Naī'nī argues, people participate directly in political affairs and carry social responsibilities. The ruler governs on their behalf and officials are considered servants¹ of the public.'

During the absence of the ideal state of the imamate, the vilayat va amanat (trusteeship) type of government was considered the best one. Anyhow, this kind of government was not free from corruption and decay because nobody could claim himself to be infallible. He points out that the coming into existence of a just ruler could not solve the problems of evil and the abuse of powers. It was not the question of who should rule which was important, but that of how to establish a protective form of political body by which the abuse of power would be barred. In order to protect the public interest and the law and to limit the power of the monarch, Na'ini suggested the establishment of a constitution and a national consultative assembly. The national consultative assembly would comprise of the intelligentsia and learned religious men. Both would protect public interest's and look after the constitution. With the participation of learned religious men in political activities, he believed, the legitimacy of the legislative assembly made by its could not be in doubt. The constitutional government, according to him, conformed with the principles of Islamic law. The government should pay attention to

¹ Ibid., 241.

justice, equality and welfare of the community. Since the ideal state was not there, the just rule could be the constitutional government

Na'ini believed that since the religious law conformed with the constitution, the opposition to the arbitrary rule was an obligation and religious duty for every Muslim. He referred to the words of the Quran which mentioned that: 'enjoying what is good and forbid what is evil'. Incase the ruler used his power in wrong way and did not perform his duties, it was necessary for Muslim community to react and prevent him from his wrong doing. This could be effectively practiced through the use of a constitution and a national legislative assembly. In the situation when the imām was absent, the mujtahids, who were religious and knowledgeable, alongwith common men, would be responsible for various duties i.e., supervising the awqāf and protecting the property of minors. He emphasized that the leadership of the community should rest with the mujtahids and the latter should participate in political matters. If it happened that the power was usurped and the ruler became a usurper, certain methods must be used to limit the exercise of arbitrary power by the government. The arbitrary rule could be ended by the creation of a constitutional assembly under the guidance of the 'ulama'. In this way a ruler would act only after consulting with the most learned and intelligent men in the country.

1 Ibid., 241.

He says :

"In the absence of the Imam, some other means must be found. There are essentially two: a constitution defining the rights and duties of the state and its subjects and an assembly of the intelligent and wise one of the land and the well wishes of the people to supervise enactment of the constitution and watch over the workings of the state. The constitution must contain no provisions contrary to Islam and the assembly, to secure its religious permissibility, must include among its members "a number of just mujtahids or of those delegated by them, who amend, approve, and agree to the decision taken by it". The assembly as a legislative body should concern itself with 'urfīyat', that is, matters pertaining to spatially and temporally determined circumstances of no interest to, and therefore not legislated by, the Sharī'a. The presence of Mujtahids in the Majlis would ensure the religious innocuity of all legislation created concerning these matters.

This prevention of absolutism, through the establishment of a constitution and popular assembly, is a religious duty despite the occultation of the imam and the concomitant withdrawal of legitimacy from the earthly plane. The duty of enjoying the good and forbidding the evil "remain" with the community at all time, and the impossibility of its perfect fulfilment does not release the believers from the obligation to strive to perform it as fully possible. Manifestation of evil should always be combatted, and the political conclusion to be drawn from this is necessity of a constitution. The unfettered rule of tyrant is productive of limitless evil, while to restrict the powers of a ruler through the institution of laws and the exercise of supervision by a popular assembly will result in a restriction of the evil that flows from his rule. Unrestricted tyranny is a usurpation of the attributes of God, as well a false claim to the right to rule. It moreover robs its subjects of their God-given-liberty and is therefore triply reprehensible. Constitutionally limited rule, by contrast, does not offend God by unlawfully holding absolute power, nor does it usurp men's freedom; it stands a usurper only with respect to the Imam

and is therefore to be preferred".¹

Naini tried to legitimize constitutionalism on the basis that there were in it some similarities with Islamic System, as he says:

"The best means to preserve such privileges as a constitutional regime and to avoid tyranny is immunity to sin, or infallibility ('ismat), on which rulership in the religion of us the twelver Shi'ah depends. This is true because the infallible person possesses God given knowledge ('ilm-i-ladunni) and all high qualities: he is far from animal passions: He does not make any mistake. He enjoys other qualifications as well, the truth of which is beyond mankind's apprehension. However, such a qualified man, namely the Imām, is not presently available. One can conceive of a highly qualified ruler, such as Chosroes with advisors such as Buzurgmihr, who might establish a rule based on supervision, inspection, and responsibility. First of all, however such a rule does not guarantee people's liberty and quality and their participation in public affairs. Second, the privileges that people might enjoy under such a government are given to them out of condescension (tafazzul) not because those privileges are the people's own right. Third, examples of this sort are very rare. Therefore, in such circumstances the only possibility left to find a substitute for the ideal government, was to choose a constitutional form of government, even though the latter would still be a usurpation of the Imām's authority".²

During the period Nā'ini, there were a number of absolutist 'ulama' who said that mushrutah was un-Islamic and accused the constitutionalists

1 Hamid Algar 'The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth century Iran' Scholars, Saints, and Sufis edited by Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley Los Angeles London 1972) pp. 239-240.

The words Naini used in the form of government and people was taken mostly from Kawakibi, only the term mashrutah was added by him.

2 Naini, Tanbih pp. 12-15. cited by Abdul-Hadi Hairi p.191

as those who propagated infidelity and irreligiosity. The absolutist 'ulamā' attacked the constitutionalists on various issues such as equality of Muslims and non-Muslims. Liberty, equality of men and women, changes in the fundamental law, legislation, punishment and so on. Nā'īnī was criticised on the ground that the new kind of regime made Europe so attractive to Muslims, closing the gate of ijtihād, giving the administration of justice to non-mujtahid judges, and basing the power of the ruler upon the people not upon God' all these were the violation of Islam.

Under such circumstances we see that Nā'īnī paid special attention to find out Islamic justification for constitutionalism and change. He also urged that the 'ulamā's participation in the government is necessary. The following is Naini's elaborate argument on the legitimacy of constitutionalism according to Shi'ism which deserves to be quoted in full:

"There are three points of which one should not lose sight : first if one commits several evils at the same time, it is compulsory to prevent the person from performing each one of them. Every single evil creates a separate responsibility for a Muslim to prevent it (nahy-i az munkar). Bad deeds should be prevented as far and in as many cases as possible. If, for instance, one is able to make another person to abandon only one of several evils he has committed, it is necessary to prevent him without taking into consideration his other bad deeds. Second, whatever action that may be against Islamic Law should be handled by the administration of the hisbah; the latter office is unquestionably under the authority of the fugahā' during the Greater Occulation of the Twelfth Imām. It is true that the 'ulamā's responsibility as General Agents of the Imām in all other offices, i.e. : rulership, is not unquestionably recognized, but we know that Islam does not allow disorder and the loss of the Islamic territory. We also know that establishing order in Islamic countries is more important than every other

duty, hisbah or otherwise. Therefore, it is also becomes a definite right and a religious duty of the 'ulama' to possess the ruling power. Third, it is generally recognized by all the 'ulama' that if some one establishes illegal power over a certain thing which is in the sphere of vilāyat (supervisorship), e.g., awqāf, and his complete removal from that position is not possible, it is still compulsory to limit his unlawful hold as far as possible. Every learned man, whether Muslim or materialist, can have no doubt about this matter.

"Once these three points are clear, there remains no room to doubt the necessity of changing a despotic regime into a constitutional one. This is true, because the former consist of three sets of usurpations and oppression : 1) It is usurpation of the authority of God and injustice to Him; 2) It is usuepation of the Imām's authority and oppression of the Imāms; 3) it also involves oppression of the people. By contrast, a constitutional system is only oppression of the Imām, because his authority is usurped. Thus, a constitutional regime limits three sets of oppressions to one: consequently it is necessary to adopt it."¹

Na'īnī tried to legitimise constitutionalism not only because he bwlieved in its own virtue, but also because it was considered by him to be better than the previous tyrannical rule. According to him, in order to run the constitutional system, the following two requisits should be fulfilled : First, the constitution should be written " in this document the limits of the ruler's power should be established. Freedom for the people and the rights of all people according to religion are to be reserved. Deviation of the ruler from his duty of limited supervisorship should make him liable for punishment as a traitor and should cost him his dismissal. Since it includes all instructions concerning politics

1 Na'ini, Tanbih, pp. 46-48 Cited by Abdul-Hadi Hairi p.198-194

and public order, a constitution is like the risālah-Yi'amaliyya of the marja'-i-Taqlid. This document is called qānūn-i asāsī (fundamental law), which should not be conflict with Islam.

"A national consultative assembly should be established in which the people's representative meet. These representative should be wise, knowledgeable, of good will, and aware of international law and world politics. They are to be responsible not to change the system of supervision (vilāyat) to possessorship. They should supervise the duties so that they be carried out properly. The executive power is responsible to the assembly and the latter to all the people. If either of these two powers (du mas'uliyat) (literally : two responsibilities), does not function properly the result will again be tyranny namely tyranny of the executive power of that parliament "1]

For Nā'ini believed that the constitution would work rightly only if it was checked by religion. He also talked about the separation of power between the executive and the parliament. His understanding of the separation of powers was not clear.² The parliamentary form of government was allowed in the tradition of Sunni Islam on the ground that the system

1 Ibid., pp. 194-195.

2 What he spoke about the responsibility of the executive power to parliament and that of the parliament to the people was rather similar to the ideas of al-kawakibi who took his materials from Alfieri.

of election of parliamentary representatives conformed with the principle of the authority of the people 'to bind and loosen' (ahl-i hall va'acd). As for the new regime's legitimacy among the Shi'ites it was based on the theory that during the Great Occulation the mujtahids were responsible for the Muslims. If a number of mujtahids or their representatives give their approval to parliamentary decisions, the constitutional system would also¹ become lawful to the Shi'ites.

The protection of constitutionalism made by Naini was important as it was for the first time that a famous mujtahid stated a position of the Shi'ites in relation to constitutionalism.

Tabatabā'ī

At the time of the constitutional Revolution there were three mujtahids who were considered to be the 'Founders' of the Constitutional Movement namely, Shaykh Fazlu'llāh, Sayyid 'Abdu'llāh and Sayyid Muhammad Tabātabā'ī; and in the learning field, Tabātabā'ī² was considered to be superior.

1 Ibid... pp. 196

2 E.G. Browne. Op.cit... p.113.

Sayyid Muhammad Tabātabā'ī, was one of the prominent liberal 'ulamā'. He was a friend of Sayyid Jamal al Dīn Afghānī and Shaykh Hadi Najmabadi¹ and was under their influence. He contacted Jamal al-Din Afghānī and accepted his ideas in opposing the government. The opposition of the unjust rule of Qajar began after his return to Iran in 1984. His uprising against the ruler began to affect when he² joined another celebrated 'alim' Sayyid Abdullah Bihbihani.

Tabātabā'ī had a deep concern for the people as he asked the Shah and his Sadr-i A'zam to establish a majlis where the people's affairs could be settled. The hostility between the Qajar ruler and the 'ulamā' continued for a long period.

The 'ulamā's hostility towards the ruling classes and their need for the improvement of the government indicated that the 'ulamā' did not recognize unjust regime. There is no need to say that they had to take to the European constitutional government as a model. But the association of 'ulamā' with others such as the intellectuals led to the idea of granting a constitution and a parliamentary system of government in the country.

1 Nikki Keddie Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution II ME Studies V5 1965, p.153.

2 Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Op.cit., p. 81.

In this connection Tabataba'ī writes:

"The removal of these corruptions depends on the foundation of an assembly and the union of the government with the people and the 'ulamā. Reform will soon take place, but we want our King and Chief Minister to carry them out, not the Russians, the British, or the Ottomans. With some slight carelessness and delay, we will lose Iran. Iran is my country: whatever reputation I have belongs to this country; my service to Islam is in this place; the respect I enjoy depends on the existence of this state. But unfortunately, I see it falling into the hands of the foreigners. Therefore, as long as I am alive I will make my efforts to protect it and, if necessary, I will sacrifice my life for it".¹ We have not demanded anything from government but justice. Our aim is to establish an assembly by which we may find out how much our helpless people suffer from the oppressive provincial governments. We want justice, the execution of Islamic Law, and an assembly in which the king and the poor may be treated according to the law. We do not talk about constitutionalism and republicanism".²

The statement of Tabataba'ī shows the reason why he rose against the régime. He clearly said that he was not fighting for a constitution for he knew that Iran at that time was not fit for the constitutional type of rule, the reason being that the people were not prepared for it.³ They had not understood nationalism and were illiterate.

1 Kasravi, Mashrūṭah, pp. 81-82, cited by Abdul-Hadi Hairi, p.84.

2 Nazim al-Islam, Bidari, p. 381, cited by Abdul-Hadi Hairi, p.84.

3 Ibid..

Tabataba'ī denied the claim that the king was "the Shadow of God on Earth". Concerning kingships he had an idea that the king may be accepted for a long period if he served his citizens well. Tabataba'ī had clear concept of constitutionalism (mashrūṭa) and did not share the idea of the 'ulamā' that the constitution was a means to bring the whole Shari'a into it.

The Iraqi 'ulamā' and the Constitution :

There were two groups of 'ulamā' in Iraq. One group was against the Persian Revolution, like Shavkh Fazl Allāh. Another group supported the constitutionalists. Tihirānī, Khurasānī and Mazandarānī of Iraq supported Tabataba'ī and Bihtihānī who favoured constitutionalism.

In the Ottoman Empire, the young Turks were glad to help the Shi'ite leaders who stayed in Iraq when Muhammad 'Alī Shāh cooperated with Russians in killing Muslims. the 'ulamā' then asked the Ottoman Sultan, as the caliph of Muslims, to intervene.

So the Muftahids of Karbala and Najaf sent a letter to the Shāh expressing their dissatisfaction with the Shāh who had handed his country to the foreign power. The reply from the Shāh was negative and the Chief muftahid proclaimed that he himself felt compelled to call the Sultan of Turkey to take Iran under the protection of the Ottoman Sultan.

1 E.G. Browne, Op.cit., p.108

Muhammad Shāh. The British wanted to stop the Persian Revolution for they feared that the same thing might happen in India, which at that time was under them. Though at the first stage the British favoured the Persian Revolution because they felt that the Russian influence in economic and political fields would be reduced, but later on the two powers joined hands to quell the Revolution. Both powers met Muhammad 'Alī Shāh on April 22, 1909 and presented a joint statement concerning certain reforms and the re-establishment of the constitutional régime. Muhammad 'Alī Shāh agreed to reestablish the constitution. He promised the restoration of the constitutional regime to 'ulamā' of Najaf and Karbala by sending a telegram to them, seeking for their favours but the 'ulamā' denied to trust him.

The British and Russians then decided to have a contact with the 'ulamā' and to have the communication separately, one to the 'ulamā' of Najaf and the other to the 'ulamā' of Karbala through the Consuls General of the two countries who stayed at Baghdad. They informed the 'ulamā' that the Shah was willing to reestablish a constitutional regime and asked the 'ulamā' to suggest the Persian Parties to be moderate. The powers sought to convince the 'ulamā' that the Russian troops had come to Iran just to protect foreign properties and not to intervene in the internal politics of Iran.

Concerning the Russian troops which remained in Iran, Khurasānī, the 'ulamā' of Iraq together with other 'ulamā' urged the British to exercise their power and remove the Russian troops from the land of Iran. In this regard

The Persian and Ottoman 'ulamā' then joined together under the banner of pan-Islam. The 'ulamā' joined the pan-Islamic movement because they wanted to take help from the Ottoman Empire for ousting the Russian invaders from the Iranian territory and to overthrow Muhammad 'Alī Shāh.

Muhammad 'Alī Shāh with the support of the Russian troops, tried to abolish the Persian constitution. Thus the 'ulamā' considered the Shāh as an infidel who helped other infidels, i.e. the Russians. Therefore, the 'ulamā' resorted to Ottoman caliphs who were encouraging pan-Islamic ideas.

The 'ulamā' of Iraq took part in attacking the Shah and the Russian troops as they saw that the Persian troops still stayed in Iran and the killing of the Muslim liberals by Muhammad 'Alī Shāh was still going on.

Now it appeared that it was not only the Iranian 'ulamā' who supported constitutionalism and rose against the Shāh. Other 'ulamā' also stood against the Shāh as their aim was to sweep out the tyrant ruler and the Russian troops from the land of the Muslims. The important 'ulamā' who in the beginning did not support constitutionalism, such as Sayyid Ismā'il Sadr, Mirza Muhammad Taqī Shīrazī and Sayyid Kāzīm Yazdī, supporter of Fazl Allāh, soon began to take part in opposing the Russians who prolonged their stay in Iran.

The Russians and the British who also had a hand in supporting the Revolution were in difficulty when the 'ulamā' rose against the Russians and

khurasānī appointed four persons to talk with the British Consul-General at Baghdad. The 'ulamā' informed the British that if the Russian troops still prolonged their stay in the cities of Iran, the hope for peace was far away. The 'ulamā' stated that they would try to have the Russian troops removed, if it was unsuccessful, they were ready to spend their life for the sake of their nation and religion. The bold step of uncompromising decision taken by the 'ulamā' in the current event created a fear for the British and the Russians.

In 1909, Khurasānī along with nearly all the 'ulamā' of Najaf went to launch a campaign in Karbala. The 'ulamā' returned to Najaf after the constitutionalist troops of Gilan and Isfahan got victory and reached Iran. Muhammad 'Alī Shāh then escaped to the Russian Embassy. Thus the policy of the Anglo-Russians to stop the revolution was not successful and the desire of the 'ulamā' to remove the Russian troops and expell Muhammad Shāh had not been changed. In the end the British and Russian submitted to the constitutionalist's demand mainly because:

"1. The nationalist leader appointed to command the Gilan troops, Muhammad Valī Khān Sipahdār, was no constitutionalist. Until spring of 1909 he had been a faithful servant of Muhammad 'Alī Shāh. Being urged by the nationalists of Gilan, possible conflicts with the Shāh, rivalry with the 'Avn al-Dawlah who was supposed to co-operate with Sipahdār in fighting against the tabriz constitutionalist, and perhaps because of other consideration Sipahdar finally decided to join the nationalists' cause. He even was, according to a British document, a "secret collaborator with the Russians".

1 Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Op.cit., p.96.

2. The constitutionalist victory under such circumstances was not going to put an end to Russian influence in Iran. The Russians already had troops in several Iranian cities and according to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, a great part of Iran was considered as the Russian sphere of influence. They could formally announce their occupation of the designated zone at any time. Even after the constitutionalist's victory, the Persian Cossack Brigade remained under the command of Colonel Liakhav, the Russian officer who bombarded parliament. This was done at the insistence of the Russian Legation's dragoman, Baranovskii upon Sipahdār.

3. The last, but not the least important reason was that the Russian wanted to avert the serious difficulties which could have been created by the Persian 'ulamā' of Iraq among the people, especially the Muslim subject of Russia".¹

Such happenings showed that the main concentration of the 'ulamā' was to attack the infidel character of Muḥammad Shāh who fully allied himself to the Russian aggression and executed a large number of Muslims. So the 'ulamā' advised the people to resist the Shāh and his government. This reason for the 'ulamā' to oppose the unjust government was not because it was against Islam. Since the 'ulamā' asked the Ottoman Sultan to involve himself in the event, it showed that they did not concentrate much on nationalism.

Khurāsānī said in his letter that 'our aim in taking such trouble is to bring a comfortable life for the people, to remove oppression, to support the oppressed and to give aid to trouble persons. We would also like to carry out God's law and to protect the Islamic land from the

¹ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

infidels' attacks. We intend to practice the Islamic concept of amr-
ibi ma'ruf va nahy'az munkar (to enjoin right conduct and forbid in-
decency) and Islamic laws which are in the interest of the people'.¹

The three leading ulama - Tihirānī, Khurāsānī and Mazandarānī expressed their thoughts in the telegram sent to Tehran saying that their involvement in the Constitutional Revolution was to save Islam and to abolish the oppressive government to provide a good life for the people and to protect life and dignity of Muslims. For them those who rose against the establishing of a constitution were considered to be ones who fought against the imām.² The support given to the constitutional movement in Persia and condemnation and practical ex-communication of the Shah by three at least of the chief mutahids of Karbala and Najaf are so well known that the views of lesser Shi'ite theologians are of comparatively small consequence.'

¹ Nazim al-Islam, Bidari n. 264, cited by Abdul-Hadi Hairi n. 99.

² E.G. Browne. Op.cit. n. 219.

CONCLUSION

The reassertion of the theological teachings of the Shi'ite Islam took place in Iran under the Qajar. Though in the first period of the Qajar rule the situations did not allow for the wide spread influence of the clergy, the way for it was paved by the ideal conditions created by the administration. The clerical influence firstly found its way during the end of Fath' Ali Shah's (d.1834) reign. The king adopted reconciliatory attitude towards the 'ulamā' mainly for the sake of state's policy. The 'ulamā' thus became important and often acted as staunch critics of the rulers. On the other hand, the king tried more to gain the favour of the 'ulamā', thus their influence continued to grow. There were many occasions when the contradiction between the ruler and the 'ulamā' could be clearly seen. When the Russians attacked Iran, the 'ulamā' strongly reacted as the leaders of the nation, and they were generally supported by the people. In the reign of Muhammad Shah (d.1848), who showed indifference towards the 'ulamā', the 'ulamā' in turn showed more hostility to the ruler. This hostility became acute in the time of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. Although he was known for his piety, he did not like the reformist measures taken by Amīr Kabīr, Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān and others. Moreover, the reformers were generally considered to be the friends of the foreign nations, thus they inevitably evoked more hatred of the clerical elements.

The necessity to borrow money from foreign countries, created by the negligence of reform and the increasing corruption taking place in the reign of Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh and the Russian invasion of the Caucasus, led to the strong protest by the 'ulamā'. They joined hands with other elements who aimed at the reform of the country. This cooperation brought about the Movement of 1905 - 1906 in which the 'ulamā' played their political role powerfully. Their role from the year 1785 to 1905 can be considered a rather constant one, and mostly they were successful in attaining their political aims. They could be called the leaders of political opposition.

The situations sometimes forced cooperation between the 'ulamā' and various interest groups such as the merchants and artisans. In the beginning of the Constitutional Movement, they had to join with the "liberal reformers. In fact, we can say that there were two types of 'ulamā' involved in the Constitutional Revolution - the absolutists and the constitutionalist. The first were those 'ulamā' who rose against the tyrannical rule which existed in Iran and continued to support liberal merchants, trades'men, artisans and the like. They did not have any real idea of the European constitutions because they were unable to read English or French. They generally were against the constitutional government because of its 'un-Islamic character', and they were not able to reconcile that with Islam. That is why sometimes they even sided with the regime which opposed the idea of a constitutional government. There were those 'ulamā' who desired the establishment of a better administration based on justice and a constitution Islamic in

character, because they supported any idea of reform which was within the framework of Islam. All their activities were conducted in the name of Islam. The modern liberal thinkers saw the need of the support from the 'ulamā' since the latter were the most influential elements among the people. But at the same they tried to keep the 'ulamā' uninformed of the true meaning of the constitutional rule since they feared that they would be rejected by the 'ulamā' if they found conflict between the modern political system and Islamic system. As elements of justice, democracy, freedom, equality, etc. could be traced in Islam, some 'ulamā' felt that there was no contradiction between Islam and the modern concepts. In this way they tried to Islamize those ideas. Nā'īnī was one of the 'ulamā' who had different approach to constitutionalism as compared to the modern thinkers like one Malkum Khān. Nā'īnī had an aim to defend Islam by way of Islamization of the constitutional principles while Malkum Khan wished the European constitutional ideas to be materialized in Iran. But since the Western system was not in the interest of the 'ulamā', it had to be justified in the name of Islamic tradition, rightly or wrongly.

It can be concluded that the 'ulamā' were successful in their action against the tyrannical rulers of Iran as well as imperialism and foreign powers in the country. As for their contribution to the establishment of Iranian Constitution in 1909, they were successful to some extent, though they were very sceptical of the process itself. Malkum Khān's suggestion conformed with many others, like Zavv ul-Abidin Maragha'i and Ḥajjī Abū-l-Hasan Mīrzā Shavkh ur-Ra'īs, that the Islamic government was similar to the

Constitutional government. His ideas gained a number of supporters among the 'ulama' who played an active role in the Revolution which, at least, released the country from the claws of her despotic rulers.

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